



THE INDEPENDENT

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Sinn Fein challenge peace plan as loyalists carry on the killings

Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness are to meet Tony Blair in Downing Street today against a background of continuing loyalist violence and increasing grassroots republican disillusionment. Our Ireland Correspondent examines the elements which underline the fragility of a peace process which faces problems both from within and without.

Loyalist violence yesterday produced yet another fatality with the shooting of a Catholic man in the Co Londonderry town of Maghera. In claiming responsibility for the killing the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF) warned that more violence would follow.

The group has now claimed the deaths of four Catholics since vowing to exact revenge for the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) killing of its founder-member, Billy Wright, inside the Maze prison just after Christmas. These killings have increased concerns within a nationalist community already anxious at the direction of the talks process.

The talks are due to get down to specific business in Belfast today on the basis of the document produced jointly last week by the British and Irish governments. But the document, while serving its purpose of providing an agenda for detailed negotiation, clearly did not produce equality of pain for participants.

Rather, it pleased David Trimble's Ulster Unionist Party but caused dismay within Sinn Fein, who complain that it represents a significant retreat from the 1995 framework document which they argue was supposed to be the starting point for negotiations.

One republican complained: "The Unionists are still refusing to engage with Sinn Fein. Their general demeanour has been that they were back in the driving seat, they had this document in their hip pocket and all was well."

Today's meeting at Downing Street will give Sinn Fein leaders Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness an opportunity to express to Tony Blair in person the criticisms which Mr McGuinness made in a series of weekend interviews.

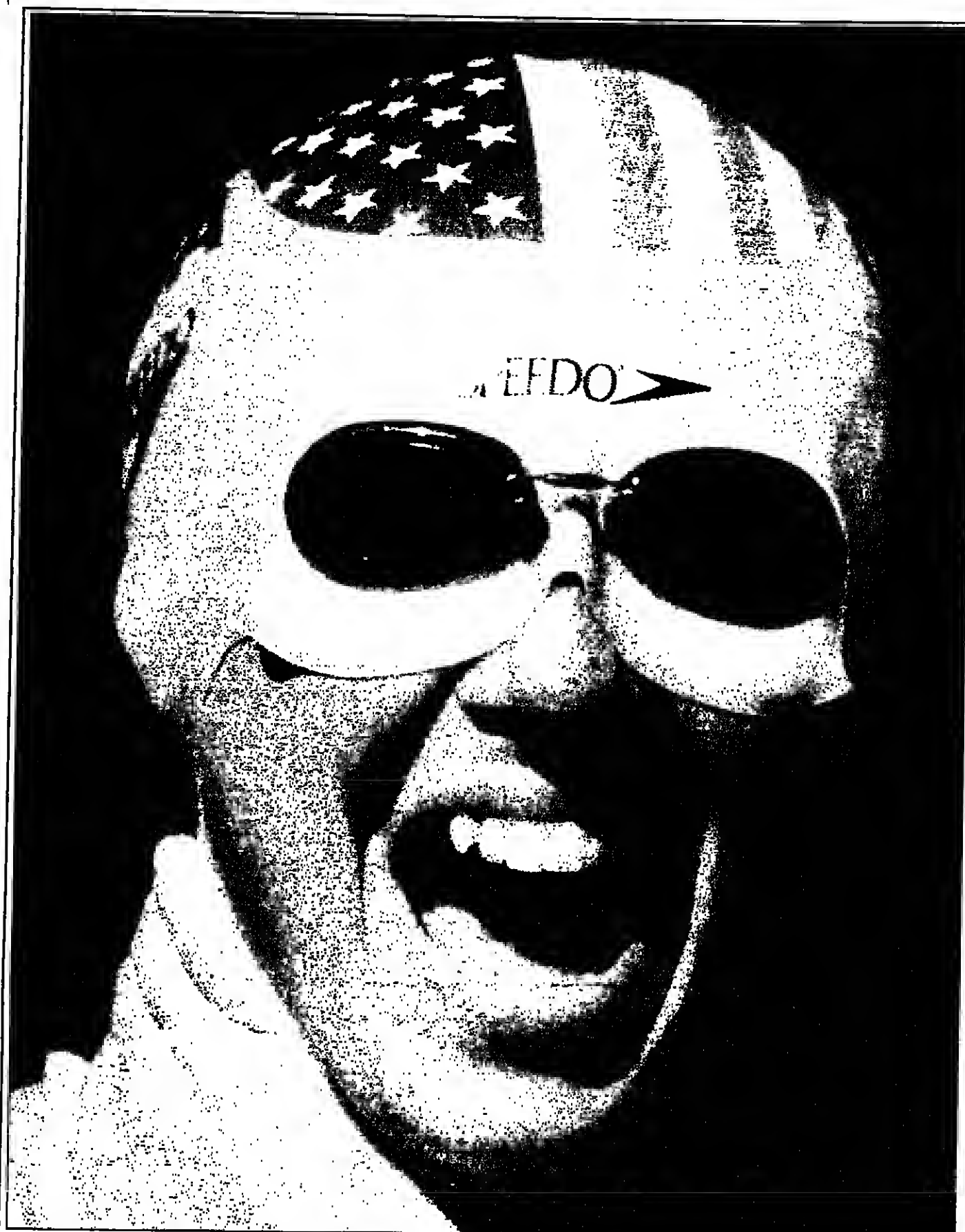
It will be the third republic-

can meeting with the Prime Minister. The first meeting took place at the multi-party talks at Stormont last autumn and on 11 December republicans went to 10 Downing Street for the first time. While those were regarded as ice-breaking encounters, republicans made it clear they hoped for continuing direct access to Mr Blair.

The latest killing came to light early yesterday following an anonymous phone call. A body was found lying near a Catholic chapel next to a youth club in Upper Main Street, Maghera. The LVF, which has carried out previous killings in the general area, warned in a statement: "This is not the last - lead the way." According to security sources, the LVF has received a significant number of recruits since the Wright assassination.

While the British and Irish governments were at one in putting forward last week's document, they appear to be at odds over the question of Bloody Sunday, when paratroopers shot dead 14 people in Londonderry in 1972. Dublin is pressing hard for an apology and a new inquiry, but after months of consideration London has yet to indicate a definite

BY DAVID
McKITTRICK



The fast tracker Arny Van Dyken of the United States showing off her new Speedo 'Speed Mask' at Challenge Stadium during the World Swimming Championships in Perth, Australia, at the weekend; report, Sport section Photograph: Al Bello/Allsport

Alarm as cloned sheep develop abnormalities

The first of a flock of transgenic sheep has been born carrying a protein in their milk to help fight disease in humans. But Ian Burrell reveals that their creators are concerned about abnormalities and high mortality rates.

The transgenic lambs that will be born during the coming weeks at a farm in Midlothian could provide a breakthrough for the treatment of such conditions as cystic fibrosis.

But PPL Therapeutics, the Edinburgh-based firm conducting the programme, has advised the government of problems with the unusual

birth-weights and high death rates of the lambs.

The PPL team developed Dolly, the cloned sheep, and then Polly, the first transgenic sheep, who was made by a nuclear transfer programme involving sheep foetal cells being given a human gene. The other transgenic sheep are clones of Polly.

In a briefing document seen by *The Independent* Ron James, PPL's managing director, reports that in an earlier trial, nine lambs out of 14 died, a mortality rate of 64 per cent compared with the normal rate for commercial flocks of 8 per cent.

Mr James wrote: "Many types of manipulation of embryos have been reported to increase foetal mortality and there is no specific reason to suspect that the perinatal

deaths are a consequence of nuclear transfer *per se*. Nevertheless we recognise they compromise animal welfare."

He also notes "at least one lamb was larger than expected". One was 8.7kg, while others weighed barely 3kg.

A company spokesperson said: "Nobody knows yet why it happened. They have some ideas and feel that some of the changes we are making now might well solve the problem. Everyone has been concerned about this."

The scientists feel that the abnormality may have been due to them producing Poll Dorset lambs using the smaller Scottish Blackface breed as surrogate mothers. The process involved taking foetal cells from Poll Dorset lambs, and inserting a human gene.

The cells were maintained in the laboratory and tested to see whether the gene had been successfully integrated before they were inserted into the ewes' eggs, from which their own DNA had been removed.

The eggs were replaced in the ewes and brought to birth. In the coming weeks, between 20 and 30 transgenic lambs will be produced to form the PPL "foundation" flock from which it hopes to produce a plentiful supply of milk containing vital human proteins.

The first lamb of the flock has already been born. Some of the sheep will carry the Factor IX gene, the blood-clotting agent which is absent in haemophiliacs. Other sheep will have Alpha-1 Antitrypsin, the protein used to fight cystic fibrosis.

INSIDE TODAY

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TOKEN COLLECT

Finally, Hughes opens his heart on Plath

PAGE 3



Is Julie Burchill the Rose West of journalism?

INTERVIEW/13

ADVERTISEMENT

How to become a freelance writer

by NICK DAWS

Freelance writing can be creative, fulfilling and a lot of fun, with excellent money to be made as well. What's more, anyone can become a writer. No special qualifications or experience are required.

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TODAY'S NEWS

Cool Britannia indeed

New Labour and the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, have helped transform the image of Britain abroad, according to research by Labour's advertising agency, BMP DDB. Foreigners believe Britons are more vibrant, creative, cool and sensitive than they were three years ago. Page 5

Blair reins in Brown

Some government ministers, as well as senior civil servants, are hoping that the simmering tension between Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, his Chancellor, could lead

to the Prime Minister taking a more active role in determining economic policy. News, page 8, and leading article, page 14

Saddam fights sanctions

Iraq has declared war on UN sanctions, calling for a million-strong volunteer force to push for an end to the seven-year embargo. Saddam Hussein warned the US against using military force to resolve a row over UN weapons inspections. George Robertson, Secretary of State for Defence, said Britain still hoped for a diplomatic solution, and dismissed Saddam's speech as "bluster". Page 9

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COLUMN ONE

Sense of history lost in music of the millennium

The most "ambitious music survey ever undertaken", as it is modestly described, reaches a climax on Saturday night when Channel 4 broadcasts the same programme twice in one evening, an honour previously awarded only to state funerals and royal weddings.

Channel 4 and HMV have compiled *Music of the Millennium*: the top 100 albums of all-time. Proving that a sense of history still eludes most of mankind, 36,000 voters rated Van Morrison, the Stone Roses and Oasis above Beethoven, Mozart and Wagner. Not one classical composer made it into the top 100, let alone the top 20.

Launched last September, the survey attempts to determine the musical preferences of the British public. Voters were asked to nominate three favourite pieces from any musical style, naming either artist or composer and the album title or recording.

Although the identity of the number one album is being kept under wraps, *The Independent* can reveal that the top 20 line up is dominated by bands from the last 30 years, including nine albums from the Eighties and Nineties. This includes two by Radiohead, Oasis's first two albums and Nirvana's *Nevermind*.

Unsurprisingly, the Beatles make the biggest impact on the top 20 with four albums: *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, *Revolver*, *The White Album* and *Abbey Road*. And Bob Dylan's *Blonde on Blonde* and *Blood on the Tracks* feature alongside David Bowie's glittery androgynous creation *Ziggy Stardust*.



Beethoven: No place in list of all-time great music

Van Morrison's *Astral Weeks*, U2's *The Joshua Tree*, The Smiths' *The Queen is Dead*, the Stone Roses' eponymously titled debut album, Miles Davis' *Kind of Blue* and Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On* complete the line up.

A spokesman for Channel 4 said: "There are some very obvious omissions from the top 100. Not only is there not a lot of jazz, but there are no classical composers, so it is easy to conclude that much of the nation no longer wants to listen to symphonic music."

Puccini, who wrote emotion-charged operas such as *Tosca* and *Madama Butterfly* scraped two votes, while Mozart received 18 nominations, just pipped by Beethoven who scored 20. Wagner, whose *Ring* cycle has inspired devotion from countless acolytes for over 100 years, only managed a disappointing 12 votes.

But Elgar, composer of "Pomp and Circumstance", was way ahead in the classical popularity stakes with a barely respectable 32 votes, a far cry from the 500 needed to get into the top 20.

Proving if nothing else that musical taste is disparate, nearly 33,500 albums received one vote and were instantly discarded from the *Music of the Millennium* countdown. This left just 2,510 albums reaching the two votes or more minimum needed to make it into the final list. Around 95 per cent of votes cast came from the 19-45 year old age range.

If the survey proves anything it is that popularity is determined by contemporary nostalgia; Salieri wiped the floor with Mozart in the public approval stakes of his day.

But let's not forget the words of Scottish poet, Andrew Lang: "He uses statistics as a drunken man uses a lamp post - for support rather than illumination".

— Nicole Yeash

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House of Commons and House of Lords

Review of Parliamentary Privilege

PARLIAMENT WANTS YOUR VIEWS

A joint committee of both Houses of Parliament chaired by a Law Lord (Lord Nicholls of Birkenhead) is looking at what special rights members of Parliament need to carry out their duties, e.g. freedom of speech, freedom to regulate their own affairs.

A short paper setting out the issues and questions is available free of charge by telephoning 0171 219 3327, by faxing 0171 219 0620 and on the Internet at: <http://www.parliament.uk/commons/selcom/privpnt1.htm>

LET US KNOW YOUR VIEWS

Please send your comments by 16th March 1998 to:

The Secretary
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LONDON
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PEOPLE



Motherly love: Liz Butler cradles her son Joe, whose birth was revealed to the world last week

I've no regrets, says the world's oldest mother

Britain's oldest mother told yesterday how a craving for Marmite, mint sauce and vinegar made her wonder if she could be pregnant.

Liz Butler, 60, said she had not taken precautions against pregnancy because she thought she had gone through the menopause.

But a "strange feeling" in her stomach made her joke with her lover, Pete Rawston, 58, that she could be expecting and a home pregnancy kit confirmed it.

Ms Butler told the *News of the World* yesterday: "I thought, 'Oh yes, oh no... oh dear! But I coped.'"

Baby Joe was born on 20 November weighing 6lb 15 oz but his birth only became known to the world outside his home in Cwmaman, Dyfed, last week.

Describing the moment when she cradled him in her arms, Ms Butler told the newspaper: "I was presented with my perfect baby. I held him and didn't regret a thing."

Liz Butler runs her own small farmhold which has no hot water and a flush toilet only in the garden. For the last year she has shared her life with Mr Rawston, whom she met when he delivered hay to her farm.

This weekend, it was announced he had returned

to his wife of 38 years, Vera, although he intends to keep in touch.

He was reportedly surprised to discover his son's mother was 60, as were the staff at the West Wales Hospital in Carmarthen where she gave birth.

She has no fears about bringing up a baby at her age. "I don't think age has anything to do with it. As an older mother, I'll have more patience, time and wisdom to give my son," Ms Butler said she was still fit enough to move sacks of cattle feed and added: "Thousands of children a week are born to parents who don't or can't give a damn. I never considered aborting my baby and I intend to be there for him."

Ms Butler, a widow whose second husband died six years ago, is believed to be the oldest woman in the world to give birth naturally. She would also appear to hold the world record for the longest gap between her first and second child. Belinda, her daughter, is 41.

A 63-year-old Californian woman lied about her age to get fertility treatment and gave birth in 1996. Rosanna Della Corte, an Italian, had a baby in 1994, following an egg implant.

— Louise Jury

Mr Bean converts disaster into mega-bucks

Mr Bean may be a nerd, but he earned Rowan Atkinson £11.25m last year, turning him into Britain's highest-paid actor.

Atkinson, 43, earned most of his millions from starring in and producing *Bean: The Ultimate Disaster Movie*, which grossed £136m, 75 per cent of which went to him.

He earned more than Lord Attenborough and Sir Alec Guinness, who came second and third in the *Sunday Times* list of the nation's highest paid actors published yesterday, earning £9.6m and 4.5m respectively.

Established actors may soon be overtaken in the earning stakes by a new generation of up-and-coming

showbusiness stars. Kate Winslet, 22, who is tipped for an Oscar for her role in *Titanic*, earned £1.8m last year, as did Robert Carlyle, 36, the Glasgow-born star of *The Full Monty*. Rupert Everett, who appeared in *My Best Friend's Wedding*, earned £1.25m.

The list of estimated incomes, compiled by Philip Beresford, author of the *Sunday Times* rich list, and Kevin Cahill, a business researcher, on the basis of actors' standard fees, percentage of film takings and records at Companies House, highlighted the thriving status of the British film industry.

Rich pickings: Rowan Atkinson (left), thought to be the highest-paid actor in Britain, and Kate Winslet, one of a group of rising stars beginning to command large fees



UPDATE

CONSUMERS

Labels are food for thought

A campaign to improve information on food labels was launched yesterday amid warnings of hidden ingredients and "unwanted extras" in the food we buy in the shops and supermarkets.

Consumers have the right to "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth" on food packets, but are often being sold short, claim the Food Commission, a lobby group.

The drive comes just days after the Government published plans to give its new Food Standards Agency the power to set new standards for labels.

"There are hidden ingredients and unwanted extras in our favourite foods, but all too often we are kept in the dark," said Sue Dibb of the Food Commission. She warned consumers were not always getting the whole truth about food, with some manufacturers failing to mention if a product contained genetically modified soya or other organisms.

Rules ought to insist on "nothing but the truth" as well to prevent misleading health and nutrition claims.

The commission is calling for food regulations to cover all products. At present some - including alcoholic drinks, chocolate, take-away foods, fish and eggs - do not have to list their ingredients and additives. Some chickens and fish are fed dyes to enhance their colour.

Food should be as free of chemicals and contaminants as possible and inspections more rigorous to boost consumer confidence, say the campaigners.

EMPLOYMENT

Council staff get part-time blues

Twice as many council workers are on temporary contracts as staff in private firms, a report showed yesterday.

One in eight people employed by local authorities are on temporary contracts compared with one in 15 in the private sector, it was found.

The difference is even more startling in education, where one in five teachers are on temporary contracts, according to the Local Government Management Board report.

Almost one in 10 council workers have second jobs, twice as many as in the wider economy, while part-time working, flexi-time and other non-standard working patterns are more common in local authorities.

More than a third of council employees now work part-time, and the trend is increasing.

"Many of the findings will surprise local authority policy makers as well as academic researchers and policy institutes," said Jill Mortimer, one of the report's authors.



TRANSPORT

Bus regulation proves a capital idea

Regulated competition for bus routes encourages more passengers on to public transport than complete deregulation, a report claimed yesterday.

Commissioned by London Transport, the study compares changes in passenger numbers in the capital with those in the rest of the country since services were deregulated in 1986.

In London alone, routes were put out to competitive tender but with London Transport retaining the power to regulate fares and services.

These routes, run by privatised firms since 1994, now carry 8 per cent more passengers than before tendering. But in the rest of Britain where open, "on the road" competition between companies was introduced, buses carry an average of 31 per cent fewer passengers than in 1986.

Over the same period, London has seen a slower growth in car ownership than other metropolitan areas, the study also found.

David Bayliss, London Transport's director of planning said: "There can be little doubt that well-ordered, managed competition in London has been better for the bus market than outright deregulation and may have helped to slow the growth in car use."

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.42	Italy (lira)	2,843
Austria (schillings)	20.21	Japan (yen)	210.83
Belgium (francs)	59.41	Malta (lira)	0.63
Canada (\$)	2.28	Netherlands (guilders)	3.24
Cyprus (pounds)	0.84	Norway (kroner)	11.96
Denmark (kroner)	11.02	Portugal (escudos)	292.69
France (francs)	9.62	Spain (pesetas)	242.39
Germany (marks)	2.88	Sweden (kroner)	12.76
Greece (drachme)	457.16	Switzerland (francs)	2.35
Hong Kong (\$)	12.23	Turkey (lira)	336,774
Ireland (punts)	1.15	USA (\$)	1.60

Source: Thomson Cook
Rates for indication purposes only

ZITS

by Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

Pilot charged over Asil Nadir's escape

Pilot Peter Dimond, arrested by police investigating the escape from Britain of tycoon Asil Nadir, was yesterday charged with perverting the course of justice. Mr Dimond, 56, a self-employed businessman formerly of Petersfield, Hampshire, is due to appear before Bow Street magistrates in London today.

Scotland Yard said yesterday: "Mr Dimond was this afternoon charged with one count of perverting the course of justice in relation to the role he played in the removal of Asil Nadir from this country on May 4 1993. He is currently in custody."

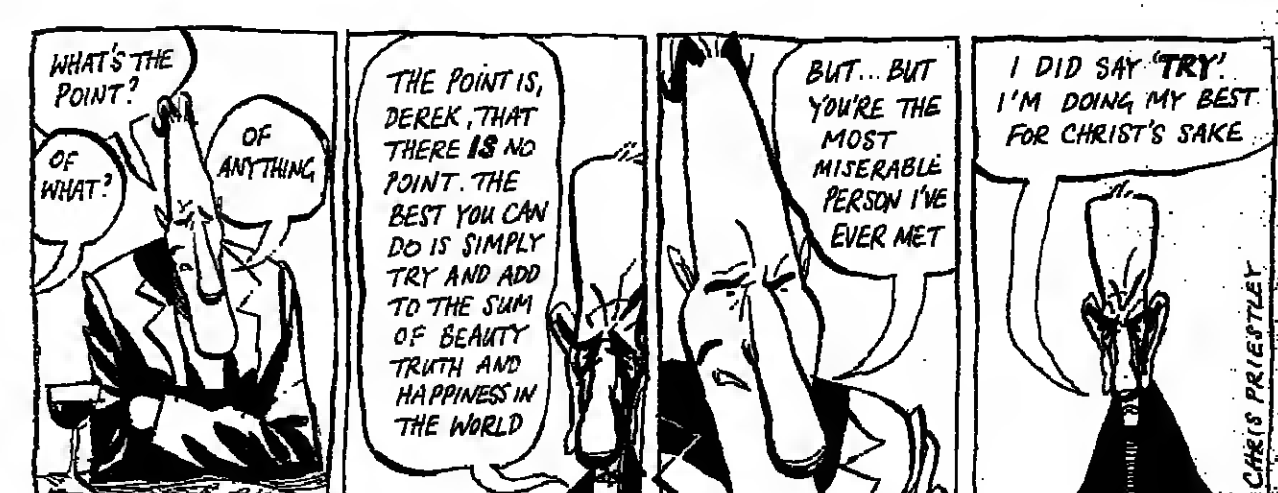
The former Polly Peck chairman, who was facing £30m theft and false accounting charges, was on £2m bail when he fled to northern Cyprus. In 1994, Polly Peck's creditors were told they were likely to get only a fraction of the £1.3bn they were owed, somewhere between £15-£55m.

Mr Dimond, who was thought to have been living in northern Cyprus for the past four-and-a-half years, was detained last Friday at Fishguard in Pembrokeshire, following a tip off to the authorities.



7.30 FOR 8

by Chris Priestley



Iron Man springs poetic surprise after a doomed love

Since the poet Sylvia Plath's suicide 35 years ago, her husband Ted Hughes, the Poet Laureate, has remained largely silent on the subject. The publication of 88 poems to her, almost all of them new to his readers, has created a sensation.

The literary world has received two great surprises with the publication of Ted Hughes's *Birthday Letters*. One is the revelation of their existence, the other manner of their expression. Since the day in February 1963 that Sylvia Plath sealed her children Frieda and Nicholas inside their bedroom, went to the kitchen and laid her head in the gas oven, a generation has grown up entranced by the doomed affair between two of the world's finest post-war poets, and keen to know more about Hughes's part in Plath's demise.

A rain of abuse, hatred and suspicion from Plath fans and feminist critics has barred Hughes for more than 30 years. Literary editors have grown accustomed to

BY JOHN WALSH

receiving mad mimeographed newsletters from Plath fanatics on American campuses accusing the Yorkshire poet of hounding, desertion and blame for her death. Cries of "Murderer!" accompanied his poetry-reading visits to British universities in the seventies and eighties. His response has been mostly silence and passivity: he has confronted literary journalists and would-be biographers of Plath over details of fact, without volunteering any new information of his own. And his family have proved adept at seeing off intrusive enquiries. When Anne Stevenson was writing a life of Plath in 1990, she was "assisted" in her analysis of Hughes's behaviour by the intrusions of his formidable sister Olwyn.

Nobody expected Hughes to do what he has done. Confession was more his late wife's thing. Hughes was *The Iron Man* (the title of his famous children's book), impervious to criticism, aloof and unbending. Now, with *Birthday Letters*, he has confounded the critics who charge him with lack of feeling, and has simultaneously reclaimed Plath as a breathing, vivid, passionate woman rather than a Nazi-obsessed victim who killed herself because her man



Sylvia Plath, late wife of Ted Hughes, the Poet Laureate, and the unexpected subject of his latest collection *Birthday Letters* Photograph: Rollin McKenna/Faber & Faber

had left her for another woman. There is no trace of calculation about these poems, no suggestion he is putting any record straight.

You can hear Hughes smiling his thin, wolfish smile as he explains to the dead Sylvia how things were meant to be. It's this tone of charm mingled with awe that characterises the extraordinary idiom of *Birthday Letters*, as they tack constantly between banal confession and rapt epiphany. It was his feral qualities, as much as his poetic genius, that attracted her to him at the start, and - appropriately for a man who writes with an insider's empathy about the savage natural world and whose most famous col-

lection, until now, was *Crow* - a curious whiff of animal physicality hangs over their initial convergence in Falcon Yard. It was a party to celebrate the publication of the *St Botolph's Review*, a literary magazine. Hughes arrived with a woman in tow, and recalls a scene of turbulence: "Girl-friend like a loaded crossbow. The sound-waves/jammed and torn by Joe Lyde's Jazz. The hall/Like the tilting deck of the Titanic." We know from Plath's own journals how things proceeded between them, a memory of passion so violent it seems to come from somewhere quite different from a mild Cambridge winter evening in 1956; "and then he kissed me bang smash on the mouth

and ripped my hairband off, my lovely red hairband scarf ... and my favourite silver earrings; bah, I shall keep, he barked. And when he kissed my neck, I bit him long and hard on the cheek ...". In *Birthday Letters*, Hughes remembers how infuriated his escort had been by his fascination for Sylvia, remembers staring at Sylvia's headscarf that he had pocketed (blue, in his recollection) and corroborates that she did indeed bite him so hard on the cheek it left a "ring-moat of tooth-marks" that would brand him for ever.

It was, clearly, quite an evening. And as its centre is a memory of his first sighting of Sylvia, a memory that flirts with

pathos, teeters towards soft-focus romanticism without ever quite misting the lens up. Hughes itemises Plath - as she once itemised her body in "Lady Lazarus" and found nothing at all at the core - and puts her back together: legs, hands, "monkey-elegant fingers", hair, mouth, eyes like "a crush of diamonds". This litany of features is both objective and subjective at the same time, a scrutiny that's infused with helpless love and artless simplicity.

"I see you there, clearer, more real Than in any of the years in its shadow. As if I saw you that once, then never again."

Reading Hughes, you learn to look

again and again at Plath's remarkable face, so blandly pretty in photographs, just as her letters home to her mother reveal nothing of the brain-stewing angst that was driving her towards self-destruction. Hughes harps on about her vast aboriginal lips, her fleshy boxer's nose, her rubbery face and brown eyes like Prussian chives. He also, with an eye to future developments, refers to the scar that marked her first suicide attempt in 1943 when she was 20. Reading this long, unfolding, detailed picture-perfect memory of lost love, you're not aware of a war going on between two impossibly mercurial people - but of a gradual realisation that to love Plath was to embark on a stormy ocean that could sink both of them. "I had no idea," writes Hughes, "how I was becoming necessary." Suicide hung in the air, it seemed, from the outset. Hughes, in love, simply ignored the warning signs that hung round his innamorata.

The fascination of this collection is the feeling of drawing near a mystery, or collection of mysteries. Was Plath so mentally unbalanced, so chronically suicidal, that her encounter with the gas oven in 1963 was a death foretold in many of her poems?

Did Ted Hughes's desertion tip her over the edge? Did her obsession with her father, Otto, lie behind her final withdrawal from the world? (In one spectacularly telling moment, Hughes remembers making Sylvia a writing table from an elm plank. "I did not know," he writes, "I had made and fitted a door/Opening downwards into your Daddy's grave"). Could two supremely gifted poets live together without one of them sucking the talent, and therefore the life, out of the other. And is it part of the poetic vocation to pick and worry at one's psychic scars until they turn septic and poison you? Sylvia Plath remains an enigma because of the dislocation between the real-life woman we think we know, and the hitler, devastating black comedian of the late poems. But thanks to Hughes, we now have Plath the charmer, the love object and the Jamesian American-girl-in-Europe, sharing the stage, so to speak, with the desolate solitary, the dangerous cheek-biter, Joanna Panic. Three and a half decades seems to become truncated as he brings her to life, with her suicide scar and her unique air of "raving exhilaration" both intact.

The fact that Ted Hughes should have been doing this, quietly and unrevealed, over the 35 years since her death, is a cause for celebration. The manner of his doing it, in calm, unburied notations of shattering detail, for future generations even less poetical than this one to read and understand, is a cause for tears.

Birthday Letters, by Ted Hughes, is published by Faber & Faber (£14.99)

Mere machines may calculate your chances of landing that computer job

Not content with taking over work, computers are now automating the process of selecting human employees. Charles Arthur, Science Editor, on how machines are making choices that change our lives.

When a new cable channel advertised for production staff, it expected to get a few hundred replies. Instead it received 5,000 CVs. Within days the four people whittling them down to "only 120" were so desperate to find some unusual characteristic that they began choosing people whose names could be found in Boney M songs.

"It was immensely painful," said Debbie Mason, a founding director of Rapture TV in Norwich. While smaller companies are struggling with a blizzard of

applications, larger ones are turning to computers, meaning many letters are never reviewed by people before being rejected. Alan Whitford, managing director of the UK subsidiary of Resumix, one of two main rivals in this field, said: "We use artificial-intelligence systems which can search for 'skills' - which might be defined as geographical, educational or work experience - and test those against 'rules'."

The result is that a shortlist of any size can be drawn up from any number of applications. Although such systems have been used in the US for a decade, they have only arrived in the UK in the past couple of years, though they are used by the BBC, British Airways and British Telecom, which employ a computing package from a US company called Restrax.

"Ours is the only product that safely considers every word in a candidate's CV," said Greg

Mancusi, marketing director of Restrax. It does this by indexing every word in the CV and ranking it against the recruiter's standards.

However, Mr Whitford said such word-based systems "don't find people they ought to find. You might not write down that you have leadership skills, but it would be clear from the context. Our system will find that."

Both systems could be flummoxed, though, by a CV which said the applicant led a life "searching for leadership, and managed somehow to keep out of department stores", because it contains key words - leadership, managed, and department.

Under the Data Protection Bill, which should become law later this year, anyone who suspects their application has been rejected by a machine will have the right to have it re-examined by a person. But it is not clear whether recruiting companies

will have to inform people they use such machines.

While the systems might be effective in weighing up applicants for jobs which require a narrow set of skills - such as a particular computer system, accounts experience and more than one language - it is unclear how they would do in sorting through the letters that come in from people seeking creative jobs. Rapture TV's ad said it was a "revolutionary new cable TV channel for teenagers" and was looking for "bright, dynamic and energetic people" with "many years broadcast experience or ... a media studies degree."

Asked how Restrax would cope with that, Mr Mancusi said: "The idea is to determine which CVs you want to spend more time with. So you are going to look for hard skills - looking for key words such as camera operating, video formats ... Our product would then rank every CV in order."

Flight offer: Europe from £34 return including tax

The Independent and Independent on Sunday, in association with easyJet, are offering readers the chance to fly to Europe from an incredible £34 return or £22 one way (all prices include airport tax).

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Record damages for man framed by police squad



George Lewis, who is to receive £200,000 compensation

Photograph: Sean Paget

A man who served five years in prison for an offence he did not commit will receive record damages from police today. Officers from the now disbanded and discredited West Midlands Police Serious Crime Squad had invented his confessions. Michael Streeter, Legal Affairs Correspondent, looks at a clear case of police corruption.

George Lewis will receive £200,000 in an agreed settlement with the force today, one of the highest compensation pay-outs for police malpractice. It is almost certainly the largest sum in damages since a Court of Appeal guidance early last year limiting the level of such awards.

The scale of the settlement, which will be announced at the

High Court in Birmingham this morning, reflects the gravity of a case in which a young man was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment after detectives invented a confession.

Mr Lewis, now 31, said: "I'm very happy that [the force] have admitted liability. That is more important than the financial settlement."

His only "crime" had been to go to a West Midlands police station, almost exactly 10 years ago, to collect his stolen car.

He was arrested, twice, racially and physically abused, then informed by two detectives from the squad that while in a police car he had already "confessed" to committing a robbery.

One of the officers, Detective Constable John Perkins, who has since died, was one of those implicated in the false confessions which led to the Carl Bridgewater murder miscarriage of justice in the Seventies.

Mr Lewis was refused access to a lawyer and after being threatened with a syringe and

a small bottle to make him talk, he signed blank pages of interview notes.

A "confession" to a burglary and two robberies were later fabricated by officers.

When he asked an inspector why he was being treated in this way, he was told it was because he had "fucked" the detectives around.

Despite later complaints of his treatment, made through a solicitor, Mr Lewis was convicted in June 1987 for the three offences and given a 10-year jail sentence; he was also told he had no grounds for appeal. Eventually, after a five-year battle, his case was referred to the Court of Appeal, which ordered a retrial; but he remained in custody until the prosecution offered no evidence in July 1992.

Five years ago Mr Lewis, who has suffered psychiatric problems, began civil action against the police but it was only last November that the force said that they were no longer contesting the case. The Bridgewater appeal revealed that Perkins had faced 23 other allegations of making up evidence.

The squad was disbanded in 1989 amid widespread allegations that detectives fabricated confessions.

In one of the cases which led to the disbandment, the Court of Appeal said that Perkins had "effectively lied" about an alleged confession.

The court quashed the convictions of more than 20 men, some serving long jail sentences, who had been convicted on the basis of squad evidence.

Despite a marathon inquiry, no detectives were ever convicted of criminal offences.

Other officers involved in the Lewis case have since retired without disciplinary hearings.

Last Thursday the Home Affairs Select Committee recommended big changes to procedures to ensure quicker and more effective disciplining of corrupt officers.

Mr Lewis is said to be still "full of anger" at his treatment, at the time it has taken to clear his name and at the lack of punishment for the guilty officers.

His solicitor, Tony Evans, said: "He has struggled for more than 10 years to clear his name."

Last February the Court of Appeal moved to reduce the level of "exemplary" damages awarded by juries in police misconduct cases to around £25,000 or less in most instances.

A black couple who reported a violent arrest by police in Stoke Newington, north-east London, and who were then themselves arrested, abused and accused of assaulting and obstructing police will receive substantial damages from the Metropolitan Police in a court settlement today.

Police break heroin gang

Police have broken a drugs gang believed to have been importing almost all the heroin brought into Britain.

The gang is believed to have dumped up to 100kg of heroin - worth £20m - on to streets across the country every week.

It was brought in from Turkey and passed through what police described as a "clearing house" in north London before being distributed to smaller dealers.

After two raids on houses in north and east London, 14 men have been arrested and around £5m of heroin recovered.

Detective Chief Inspector John Shatford, heading the operation, said the raids would severely disrupt the flow of heroin in to the UK. "We believe that all the heroin coming into this country goes to this gang in north London which acts as a clearing house," he said. "It is difficult to imagine a more significant seizure and we are all very pleased."

A spokeswoman for Scotland Yard said the year-long operation to track down the rest of the gang, which includes a number of Turkish nationals who used the local Turkish community as a cover for their activities, would continue.

— Kate Watson-Smyth

Animal-rights arrests

Detectives were yesterday examining incoherent devices thought to belong to animal-rights activists.

The devices and associated materials were seized from a car stopped by police in Northampton yesterday.

Two men in their thirties are being questioned and the officer heading the investigation described the discovery as a "very significant find related to animal-rights activity".

A police spokeswoman said officers stopped and searched a red Vauxhall Cavalier following a police operation in Camp Hill, Northampton, shortly before 4pm on Saturday. "Two men... one of them from London and the other from the Northampton area - were inside the car at the time. Both were arrested at the scene."

Boy, aged 9, found hanged

A nine-year-old schoolboy was found hanged by his own dressing gown cord in a bedroom of his home, police said last night.

Dale Clough was found hanging from a top bunk in a flat in Stonehouse, Plymouth. Neighbours believe the boy was found, late on Saturday night, by his brother Daryl, seven, who alerted his parents, Kareo Clough, 27, and Wayne Harford, 32, who also have five-month-old twin daughters, Kacey and Debbie.

A spokesman for Devon and Cornwall Police stressed: "This is not a suicide. It is not a game, purely a tragic accident."

National Lottery winners

Four ticket-holders, including two family syndicates, shared £15.8m in the National Lottery roll-over jackpot draw on Saturday. The winning numbers were 14, 31, 33, 38, 46 and 48. The bonus ball was 26.

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Move to reduce alcohol limit in drive to cut road deaths

Drinking and driving claims the lives of more than 500 people every year. Randeep Ramesh and Jeremy Riggall examine the measures ministers are considering to cut the death toll on Britain's roads.

The Government is to launch a consultation paper at the end of this month which will propose a lower drink-driving limit and set out radical measures to deter motorists from drinking and driving.

Ministers favour a blood alcohol limit of 50 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood - down from the present 80mg limit. It will be the first reduction in 30 years. The year-long driving ban is likely to stay.

Any reduction is unlikely to produce a backlash. A recent poll by ICM showed 85 per cent of the public backed a lowering of the limit.

Although Britain is recognised as having an effective road safety policy, officials say the number of deaths caused by drink-driving has remained static at 540 a year for four years.

In order to cut further the death toll, ministers are minded to consider tougher penalties for high-risk or repeat offenders. These measures may see persistent offenders losing their licences for life or extend the mandatory 12-month driving ban. Another option could see motorists who ignore the drink-driving limit forfeiting their car.

Young drivers may also face tougher drink drive limits. Officials point out although "early" drivers only make up 10 per cent of the driving population,

they cause 20 per cent of accidents. In some US states, the number of fatalities caused by young drivers dropped by 50 per cent after introducing "super-low" limits for teenagers.

Ministers, however, have been advised that a limit of 20mg for motorists with less than three years' driving experience may not significantly cut accident rates. Civil servants say creating a two-tier system may just result in young drivers drinking more after they pass a certain date.

Motoring organisations are not in favour of tougher drink drive limits. "We think more police enforcement of the current limits would significantly bring down levels," said a spokesman for the AA.

But evidence suggests otherwise. Experts say that having 50mg of alcohol in 100ml of blood makes a driver twice as likely to have an accident as a motorist with a zero reading. Researchers at the University of Leeds have shown that despite being under the current limit, motorists' driving can be affected. "There are small but consistent detriments to driving even under 80mg," said Andrew Parks, principal research fellow.

Richard Allsop, professor of transport studies at University College, London, estimates that 100 lives a year could be saved if the 50mg limit was adopted. Random breath testing by the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions showed 2.3 per cent of drivers could be driving with alcohol levels between 40mg and 80mg.

A lower limit will bring Britain in line with the rest of Europe. France, Belgium, Greece and the Netherlands all have a 50mg limit.

Sweden has the lowest

drink-driving laws, set at 20mg in 1990. "From January to the end of October we carried out 12,000 alcohol tests and found only 90 to be above 20mg, which works out at 0.75 per cent," said Inspector Glenn Anderson of Stockholm police.

With twice as many road deaths as Britain, France lowered its limit to 50mg in 1995 and introduced campaigns to inform people how much they could drink. Disposable breathalysers were put on sale in service stations, supermarkets and chemists. Initial reports claim this has saved lives.

Paul Dumontet, spokesman for the transport department in France, says that having a glass or two with a meal is *de rigueur* for the French. "We have to be realistic. The French like to drink wine at lunch time. We are simply trying what the safe driving alcohol level is."

British ministers believe the problem with countries such as Belgium and France is not the limit, but the very light penalties.

At Westminster, ministers are keen to promote a package of measures. Reducing the alcohol limit has to go hand in hand with enforcement to get results. When politicians in the Capital Territory of Australia reduced the limit from 80mg to 50mg they also introduced random breath testing, and there was a 41 per cent reduction in offenders who were three times over the limit.

"We aim to cut the number of deaths on Britain's roads significantly," said Baroness Hayman last week. "But we will do so with a balanced package. There are many weapons in the armoury. But it will be through education first, then compliance, enforcement and finally legislation that we bring about change."

COST OF EXCEEDING THE LIMIT

Country	Limit	Minimum Penalty	Road deaths per 10,000 motor vehicles
Sweden	20mg*	3 months disqualification	1.3
Victoria (Australia)	50mg*	6 months disqualification	1.45
Netherlands	50mg	6 months disqualification	1.8
Maryland (US)	70mg	60 days disqualification	1.83
Great Britain	80mg	12 months disqualification	1.5
France	80mg**	900FF fine and endorsement	3.0

*Enforcement by random breath testing
** France has recently reduced the limit to 50mg
Source: The Foreman Group July 1997



Waiting game: Twitchers taking advantage of the 'Big Bird Watch' yesterday at Doncaster's Potteric Carr Nature Reserve in South Yorkshire. Photograph: Steve Forrest

Plea to Irvine over legal aid for breast implant woman

British plastic surgeons have written to the Lord Chancellor complaining about legal aid being given to a woman who says her baby suffered as a result of her being given a silicone breast implant.

The British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons say there is no medical proof that silicone makes people ill.

It wants the Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine of Lairg, to reconsider the decision to allow Mary Bowler limited legal aid to look at the possibility of suing the manufacturers.

Mrs Bowler, 26, of North Walsham, Norfolk, alleges her daughter's stomach cramps, skin problems and food allergies are a result of silicone poisoning. She had a single implant for medical reasons in January 1993, and fed Danielle for three days after she was born 21 months ago.

Campaigners fighting to ban silicone breast implants welcomed the move and said other mothers had been inspired to apply for legal aid after making similar claims. The letter to Lord Irvine warns of pandering to "junk science" and says doctors are dismayed.

It continues: "It is appalling that the people responsible for this decision did not ask whether there is any evidence ...

"There is no scientific evidence whatsoever that silicone causes systemic disease in women who have had implants, nor that it causes problems with their babies. In fact, Toronto-based research that has been accepted for publication indicates that silicone levels in commercial infant formulas are much higher than in the breast milk of women with implants. We are therefore asking you to reconsider the Legal Aid Board's decision."

We hope that the scientific and legal communities in the UK will be alerted to the threat junk science imposes on society and will move quickly to control it. They warn that the ultimate consequence may be a shortage of devices such as pacemakers and artificial joints.

The letter is signed by Bradford University's Professor David Sharp, the president of the association, and four American and Canadian experts in the field.

About 5,000 women in the UK have breast implants every year, 3,000 of them with silicone gel implants. Up to 40 per cent of operations come after a mastectomy and the rest are cosmetic. Previous studies have shown so far that no evidence of a link has been found between implants and illness.

DAILY POEM

Reconfirming Light

By Matthew Sweeney
for Tom Lynch

On Mullett Lake in mid-March
two pickups are parked by blue ice-shanties.
Fishermen are inside. Perch
and walleye are what they're after
through their holes in the ice, although
a week, two weeks from now is best,
right before the ice melts and thermal
inversion sends the fish wild.
And shanties and pickups go under.

Down there, deep, cruise the sturgeon,
big as torpedoes. They're never seen
except when they lounge on the top
to reconfirm light, or when a hook
snags one and a boat's tugged in circles.
Slowly though. There are worse catches -
corpses that lie on the bottom all winter
then float up to be towed in,
wearing clothes a size too small for them.

This is our final Daily Poem from the volumes shortlisted for the 1997 T S Eliot Prize, presented by the Poetry Book Society. The award will be made at the British Library this evening. "Reconfirming Light" comes from *The Bridal Suite* (Cape, £7). © Matthew Sweeney.

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7/HEALTH NEWS

THE INDEPENDENT
MONDAY 19 JANUARY 1998
7

Films of babies to be used in evidence over vaccine damage

Parents are to use homemade videos of their healthy babies as evidence that they were permanently damaged by a controversial vaccination. Ian Burrell reports on growing concerns over the jab designed to protect children against mumps, measles and rubella.



The family camcorder recorded that baby Matthew Poulter was passing all his milestones well before his time. He was cruising across the furniture by seven months and walking unaided within a few days of his first birthday. Then, when he was 15 months old, his mother took him for what she thought was a routine vaccination.

"I was just one of those mothers who thought vaccination was good for all," Rochelle Poulter said. "I assumed that all the safety trials had been carried out and this was something safe and beneficial for my child."

The mumps, measles and rubella (MMR) vaccination which Matthew was given is still staunchly defended by the Department of Health, as a vital element in the child immunisation programme. But growing numbers of parents believe that the jab has left their babies suffering from inflammatory bowel disorders, such as Crohn's disease, encephalitis and juvenile arthritis as well as autism.

Matthew now has both. Mrs Poulter, of Brighton, east Sussex, said: "He had been a sociable child but his speech just stopped. He was not saying anything, just grunts and moans." At other times, the seven-year-old throws violent tantrums, screaming bad language. At school he is on a par with the reception children, who are three years younger.

Mrs Poulter said: "I am convinced it was the MMR. There was no other trauma that could possibly have caused it."

Mrs Poulter's video recordings are to be submitted, along with those of 20 other children believed to be suffering from the effects of MMR, for analysis by Dr Simon Baron-Cohen, a psychologist from Cambridge Uni-

versity, who will assess their behaviour alongside that of apparently normal children and make a judgement as to whether their condition has deteriorated after having the jab.

Richard Barr, of Norfolk solicitors Dawbarns, who is representing 1,300 families seeking compensation, said: "The total contrast in some of them is astonishing."

The families are bringing a legal action against the Department of Health and three MMR vaccine manufacturers, Merieux, SmithKline Beecham and Merck Sharpe & Dohme.

A major study is expected to be published shortly into possible links between MMR, Crohn's disease and autism, following research by Dr Andrew Wakefield at the Royal Free hospital, north London.

Two forms of the MMR jab were withdrawn in 1992. The Merck product is still used. Campaigners are questioning Japanese officials to ask why Japan has withdrawn its combined MMR vaccinations.

Jackie Fletcher, a 40-year-old mother from Warrington, Cheshire, has formed the Justice, Awareness, Basic Support (JABS) group to fight the MMR campaign. She claimed that the three vaccines together were too much for a child's immune system. She believes the vaccines should be given separately. She is confident that the video recordings will give the families vital evidence for their claim. "They are saying that the footage of their first birthdays shows them happy and joining in conversation. By the next year the child is starting to slip away, turning their back on everyone. It's like a slow withdrawal."

But Tessa Jowell, the health minister, believes that so far there is insufficient evidence to justify any change in the vac-

ination policy. The Department of Health pointed out that before the MMR vaccination around 100 children a year died from measles. Mumps, a common cause of viral meningitis, led to 1,200 hospital admissions a year before MMR.

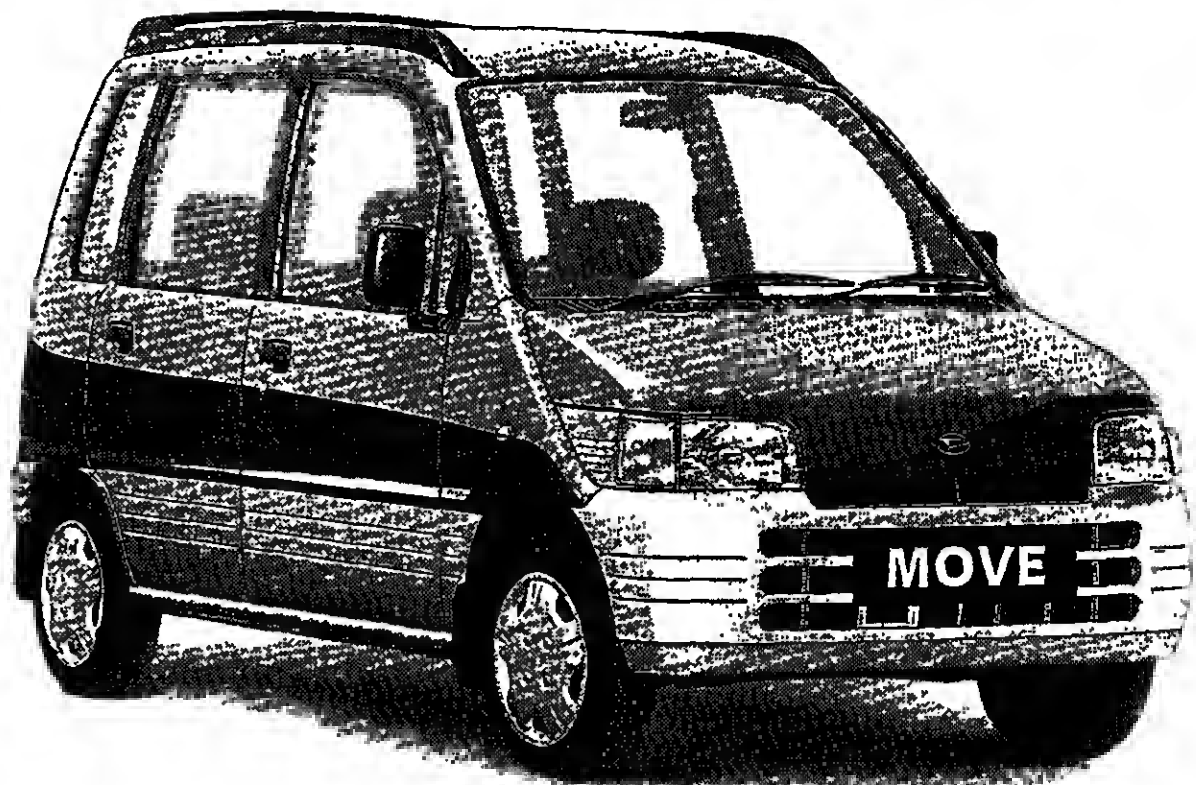
Although the three diseases are now extremely rare, officials say that without the vaccines they will return. Sir Kenneth Calman, the chief medical officer, said the benefits of MMR were overwhelmingly clear and there was no doubt that parents should continue to have their children immunised. He said that risks from the vaccine were extremely small but risks from the diseases were considerable.

Sir Kenneth added: "A rigorous scrutiny of the evidence by both the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation and the World Health Organisation established that there was no link between the MMR vaccine and autism and Crohn's disease."



Family matters: Rochelle Poulter with her son Matthew, seven, who is now autistic. Above left, Matthew before the MMR vaccination. Photograph: Andrew Hasson

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Patients unaware they have HIV

More than 600 men and women carrying the Aids virus treated at sexually transmitted disease clinics did not know they were HIV positive, a survey has found.

Jeremy Laurence, Health Editor, reports on how ignorance is putting lives at risk.

Anonymous testing of patients attending sexually transmitted disease clinics in London and the south-east has revealed that, of those tested, more than a third of homosexual men and a half of heterosexual men and women carrying the virus did not know they were infected.

HIV-positive patients who do not know they carry the virus cannot start drug treatment to prevent Aids developing and may pose a risk to others if they do not adopt safe sex techniques. New combination drug therapies have transformed the outlook for patients with the virus by delaying the onset of Aids and converting a death sentence into a chronic condition.

The annual survey, by the Public Health Laboratory Service, also found that 77 per cent of HIV-positive pregnant women attending the clinics did not know they were infected with the

virus. By taking anti-Aids drugs and avoiding breast feeding, infected women can reduce by two-thirds the chances of their babies being born with the disease.

Dr Diana Wolford, director of the Public Health Laboratory Service, said: "Unless individuals are tested they are unable to benefit from recent advances in treatment and also continue to run the risk of unwittingly infecting others."

The anonymous testing, begun in 1990, is carried out to establish the spread of the disease.

The figures show that 358 HIV-positive homosexual men, 36 per cent of those treated in STD clinics in London and the south-east in 1995 and 1996, were unaware that they carried the virus. This rose to 45 per cent of heterosexual women (118) and 55 per cent of heterosexual men (142). Among HIV-positive pregnant women, 77 per cent (302) did not know they were infected. The figure has led some consultants to call for routine HIV testing to be introduced in ante-natal clinics.

Among the most disturbing findings in the report is that 140 HIV-positive homosexual or bisexual men attending an STD clinic also had a new sexually transmitted disease, implying they had continued to practise unsafe sex. In nearly two-thirds of these cases the men knew they were infected and were continuing to put their partners at risk.

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Blair clips Brown's wings by bolstering power at No 10

Tony Blair is strengthening the Prime Minister's office and his control over the Whitehall machine - including the Treasury.
Anthony Bevis, Political Editor, reports on the power-house at No 10.

Ministers are hoping that the recent friction between the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of

the Exchequer over Gordon Brown's biography will stiffen Mr Blair's determination to play his full role as First Lord of the Treasury.

There is growing concern in Cabinet that control over the economy is being too tightly held by Mr Brown, and is being pursued as part of an agenda that does not always mesh with that of the Government as a whole.

It has been pointed out that in the eight months since the election, the Cabinet's economic affairs committee (EA),

chaired by Mr Brown, has met fewer than half a dozen times.

Much of its business is conducted through bilateral correspondence between the Chancellor and ministerial colleagues, with copies sent to members of the EA. That process does not allow debate, and ministerial concerns are being increased by reports that they are not the only people being excluded - senior Treasury officials, too, are complaining that they are also being barred from the policy-making process.

Mr Blair has recently made three moves at the centre that could strengthen his own base in dealings with the Treasury.

Sir Richard Wilson, former Permanent Secretary at the Home Office, this month replaced Sir Robin Butler as Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service; the Strategic Communications Unit has started work at No 10, increasing the two-way flow of information between the Prime Minister's office and all departments; and a Treasury official,

Jeremy Heywood, has been appointed Mr Blair's economic and domestic policy secretary - one of a strong team of private office staff led by John Holmes, the Principal Private Secretary.

Mr Blair is said to have the highest respect for the team that is now being built up: Sir Richard - a constructive maverick who means it when he says "Yes, Prime Minister" - is attending far more meetings than Sir Robin did; the policy unit, led by David Miliband, is said to be delivering a superb prod-

uct; and the Cabinet Office team, particularly Brian Bender, the European expert, have also impressed Mr Blair.

But Mr Blair's key problem remains his relationship with Mr Brown, whom he has over-ruled on a number of occasions since May; not least in ordering a Commons statement ruling out single currency membership before the next election; forcing him to disgorge an extra £300m to avert a winter crisis in the NHS; and in excluding him from a lead role in welfare reform.

At last Thursday's Cabinet, Mr Blair talked of the importance of ministers sticking together - but only in the context of Jack Straw's problems with his son. He also urged ministers to give their public support to the Millennium Dome.

Few of the ministers present will have been unaware of the fact that Mr Brown's closest colleagues have been saying for weeks that the Chancellor opposes the project, if only because it is controlled by Peter Mandelson, minister without

portfolio and the man he still blames for backing Mr Blair's bid, as opposed to his own, for the leadership in 1994.

For the moment, Mr Brown's simmering dispute with Mr Blair remains just that. However, if Mr Brown and his closest colleagues continue to operate outside the No 10 loop Mr Blair can be expected to take firm action.

There is no talk of the Prime Minister dropping the Chancellor but if Mr Brown pushed his luck too far, for too long, that could not be ruled out.

Labour denies block on walkers

A Government consultation paper on the right of people to roam the countryside is expected "shortly", a spokesman for the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions said yesterday.

But No 10 said it "did not recognise" a suggestion made in yesterday's *Independent on Sunday*, that Tony Blair had intervened, at the request of landowners, to ensure that Labour policy was introduced by voluntary agreement rather than statutory right.

Labour's election manifesto said: "Our policies include greater freedom for people to explore our open countryside." But it added: "We will not, however, permit any abuse of a right to greater access."

Intervention by the Prime Minister's office, and by Peter Mandelson, minister without portfolio, is in policy-making, and it would not be unusual for No 10 to have put its own imprint on a consultation paper.

But Labour MPs have already warned that any attempt to water down the party commitment to greater access to the countryside, through voluntary agreements that have failed in the past, would be unacceptable and would provoke backbench outrage.



Land and freedom: Labour pledged a right to roam for ramblers but some reports say landowners have succeeded in lobbying for restrictions

Photograph: Rob Stratton

Green belt protests grow

Two Labour MPs added their voices to the growing clamour for the protection of the green belt yesterday, urging the Government to scale down its house-building plans.

David Drew and Paddy Tipping said that they hoped the Government would listen to the countryside and halt plans to build a further 4.4 million homes over the next 25 years.

But Nick Raynsford, the housing minister, dismissed suggestions that the green belt was under threat, insisting the Government's house-building plans were no different to those of previous governments.

The rising number of people living alone or without their partners is one of a number of factors blamed for the increasing demand for new housing.

Environmentalists want all new housing to be built in inner cities, so-called brownfield sites, rather than on out-of-town greenfield sites.

Estimates put the number of new houses needed in the next 25 years at more than 4 million.

Mr Drew said he wanted to see the Government scale down its house-building plans and he said that many other Labour MPs shared his view.

"The numbers are growing all the time, I do believe it's hundreds of Labour MPs," he told BBC television's *On the Record*.

Mr Drew, MP for Stroud, is spearheading a new all-party group to put pressure on the Government to reduce the number of houses set to be built over the next 25 years.

"We would hope that there will be the start of a national debate... We would like MPs to join that debate," he said.

And Mr Tipping, who is MP for Sherwood, said on the same BBC programme: "It's a time-bomb that's been ticking quietly for some time."

"The ticking's getting louder, and now the actual sites are being examined it's about to explode and local people who are affected are beginning to explode and say: 'We're not having houses in the green fields in the countryside around us'."

He added: "Rural Britain has been critical of the new Labour government."

"They say that the Government isn't listening to them, they say there's been a ban on firearms, they're concerned about a possible ban on fox hunting and this is another touchstone issue that the Labour Party needs to consider carefully."

Heath attacks 'intolerant' Hague as Tory rift over Europe deepens

The Tory war over Europe was stepped up yesterday, with Sir Edward Heath attacking the intolerance of William Hague, while the party leader stiffened his opposition to a single currency.
Anthony Bevis reports on the continuing split.

The increasing bitterness of the Conservative conflict over Europe was illustrated by Sir Edward yesterday when he attacked the autocratic nature of the new leader.

The former Conservative prime minister told GMTV's *Sunday Programme*: "One can't help noticing the most popular or the most familiar phrase used by Mr Hague is, 'I will not tolerate'. You can't take that line

as a leader of a party if you want to hold the party together with different views."

In a separate interview with BBC television's *Breakfast with Frost*, Mr Hague put more flesh on his political qualifications about a single currency - adding to the economic block that has been extensively spelled out since he became leader.

Mr Hague said: "We shouldn't say never; we shouldn't rule something out when we don't know how it's going to work, but we also shouldn't say that we're definitely going into it when we don't know how it's going to work."

"The single currency won't be up and running properly until 2002. Now I say you need to see how that works in good times and bad for several years."

But he then added: "And you need to see whether it means that other major decisions are

transferred to European institutions and out of the control of the people of this country, and you need to know all that before you could know whether you were going to join a single currency."

But when Sir Edward was asked about Michael Portillo's view, that the single currency was incompatible with democracy, he said that was appalling nonsense.

"And how anybody who's had his experience can stand up in public and say that, I really don't understand," he said. "There's nothing undemocratic about it."

As for Mr Hague's repudiation of the Tory grandees who wrote a letter of support for Europe to *The Independent* during the parliamentary break, Sir Edward said: "When I was leader of our party, I never said, 'Well, of course, Churchill and Macmillan, they're all passé;

they don't matter, don't pay any attention to them'."

"It's not really quite the way the leader of the party normally behaves... and so I think that letter might have been treated with some respect."

Sir Edward said that no businessman would dream of ruling something out for 10 years, as Mr Hague had done with the single currency.

There is a strong view in sections of the party that Mr Hague will be challenged for the leadership before the next election, and there is a feeling that if the leadership rules are changed - as currently proposed - to allow an incumbent leader to be ousted with just 41 MPs, or quarter of the parliamentary party, backing a vote of no confidence, then Mr Hague's position would be in severe jeopardy if either Mr Portillo, or Chris Patten, were returned to the Commons.

Dobson denies call to scrap care in community

A weekend report that care in the community was to be scrapped was yesterday repudiated by Frank Dobson, Secretary of State for Health.

He told a BBC Radio 5 Live phone-in that there was a substantial minority of people who were either dangerous, or made such a nuisance of themselves that they needed 24-hour supervision - but that did not mean, as the *Daily Telegraph* reported on Saturday, that the entire care in the community scheme was to be abolished.

"We have been looking at the care in the community policy," Mr Dobson said. "I have always believed, even when we were in Opposition, that it worked for a large number of people but it didn't work for a substantial minority."

"They have been put on

the streets, in effect, left to look after themselves, were very, very vulnerable from their own point of view, could be at least an awful nuisance to their neighbours and other people in the street and round about, and in some cases were actually dangerous..."

"We have to look at it again: there are some people who are not receiving 24-hour supervision and care at the moment who need it and we're going to have to provide it."

He said he felt that the fine had been drawn in the wrong place. "I think they thought that virtually everybody could cope on their own. I think there was a feeling, as we approach the end of the 20th century, people would be able to cope a bit better - but peo-

ple who couldn't cope, couldn't cope."

Some of them posed a real danger; others were a nuisance to neighbours. "I think people are entitled to walk down the street where they live without being confronted by people who frighten them," he said.

But Mr Dobson added: "We need to look at this right across the spectrum - from people who are just a bloody nuisance to people who may be a danger and against whom legal action needs to be taken."

One of the health ministers, Paul Boateng, is currently reviewing mental health law, and proposals will be brought forward for consultation before any change is introduced.

— Anthony Bevis.



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Saddam steps up pressure on UN with call to arms

Iraq turned up the volume in the war of words over United Nations arms inspectors yesterday. It called up a million Iraqis for weapons training, and warned it would cease all co-operation with the UN. But both sides are still fencing, says Andrew Marshall.

and humanity - America and Zionism - are still continuing their evil work and searching for any thread of hope to fulfil their wicked goals," President Saddam said.

He warned the US against using military force to resolve the dispute over UN weapons inspections in Iraq, which flared again last week when an American-led team was barred. And he threatened to carry out a recommendation by Iraq's parliament which gave the UN weapons inspectors a May deadline to complete their work.

Defence Secretary George Robertson said he still hoped for a diplomatic solution to the crisis. "I think we are likely to hear a lot of noise but hopefully a diplomatic solution will be found," he told BBC television.

Britain on Friday sent the aircraft carrier *Invincible* to the Gulf. But Mr Robertson declined to be drawn on the possible use of force by the US and Britain, saying it was a last resort.

The confrontation - a repetition of events late last year - is still in its early stages. The weekend's eruptions seemed timed to coincide with the visit to Baghdad today of the UN's chief arms inspector Richard Butler, who heads the United Nations Special Commission (Unscm) charged with dismantling Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

America has only one close supporter on the UN Security Council: Britain. France, Russia and China have all distanced themselves from the US stance, and sought ways around the problem. During last year's confrontation, violence was averted when Russia brokered a deal that seemed to offer Saddam a way out of sanctions.

Iraq's Vice-President, Taha Yassin Ramadan, said 1 million Iraqis would take part in weapons training starting next month as part of a *jihad* (holy war) to end UN sanctions on their country. "We are determined [to carry out] a great *jihad* to lift the sanctions," Mr Ramadan said. "There is no alternative to this after seven years of patience and co-operation with the United Nations and its committees."

Saddam Hussein had urged mobilising the Iraqi people on Saturday night in comments to leaders of the ruling Baath Party, saying that "the Americans are continuing to harm our people, which requires a new method of response".

Speaking on the seventh anniversary of the outbreak of the 1991 Gulf War, the Iraqi President said the country faced a continuing military threat from the United States and called for volunteers. "We should show an essential part of the people's determination under the leadership of the great Baath [Party] to fight in order that Iraq exists and remains as it should be," he said.

"Although we are in the eighth year [since the war] our enemies, the enemies of God



Patriot game: Iraqi women answer President Saddam's call-to-arms yesterday. They are due to start weapons training next month Photograph: AP

Algeria 'terror' talks

Algeria will take a tough stand in talks with a European Union delegation arriving today, focusing on ways to confront "terrorism" and repeating its demand that European countries crack down on Muslim militants.

Western and Algerian political analysts in the capital Algiers said at the weekend that the Algerian government will insist that it faces "terrorist" acts of violence rather than a political crisis.

It will also tell its visitors it does not need humanitarian aid for victims of a recent wave of massacres in which some 1,100 civilians have been killed in less than three weeks.

"The authorities will argue that the political crisis has long been resolved with the election of a president, a parliament and local councils," one Western analyst said.

Algeria agreed to the EU mission in a rare display of willingness to discuss the bloodshed. But it has rejected any attempts to interfere in its internal affairs and any inquiry into the massacres.

Algeria plunged into civil strife after the authorities in January 1992 cancelled a general election which the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to win. More than 65,000 people have since been killed. Most of the attacks on civilians have been blamed by officials and Algerian media on the radical Armed Islamic Group (GIA).

The EU delegation includes junior foreign ministers from the so-called *troika* - Luxembourg, Britain and Austria.

— Reuters, Algiers

Iraqi envoy and seven others murdered in Jordan

Iraq's chargé d'affaires in Jordan and seven other people, including his wife, were stabbed to death in Amman early yesterday. The identity of the attackers and their motive is not known. Patrick Cockburn reports on the increasingly violent relations between Jordan and Iraq.

The Iraqi diplomat, Hikmat al-Hajou, the chargé at the Iraqi embassy in Amman, was killed with his Egyptian-born wife, a number of Iraqi businessmen and an Egyptian bodyguard in a wealthy suburb of the Jordanian capital early yesterday morning. First reports said they were stabbed. A woman who survived is being treated for knife wounds.

The identity of the attackers is not known, although the survivor said there were four or five and they spoke Arabic with Iraqi accents. The Iraqi foreign ministry condemned the

"treacherous crime carried out last night in Amman." It said it was sending a diplomat and a general from the security forces to Amman to investigate.

The murders come after violent incidents which have led to tension between Amman and Baghdad. Last month Iraqi security intercepted a letter from Jordan to Maj-Gen Jalil al-Sadoun, one of the Iraqi military establishment, which it saw as evidence of a plot. In retaliation President Saddam Hussein executed four Jordanian students under arrest in Iraq for small-scale smuggling. On 3

January shots were fired at an Iraqi diplomat in Amman but he was not hit.

Mr Hajou served in Kuwait just before the Iraqi invasion in 1990, where he worked also for the mukhabarat, the Iraqi general intelligence service. More recently the regime is said to have had doubts about his loyalty. Jordanian officials were eager to portray the killings as an inter-Iraqi feud.

The attack took place at the two-storey villa of an Iraqi businessman, Sami George, in West Amman.

Several of the others who

died were Iraqi businessmen of Turkoman origin from the city of Kirkuk in north-eastern Iraq. It is possible the attack was the result of a commercial dispute over the lucrative import trade into Iraq.

Nevertheless, Iraqi business has not provoked such savage killings in the past. It is not inconceivable that Iraqi security itself might have acted against Mr Hajou.

The murders appear to be part of a trend for diplomatic friction between Iraq and Jordan, once close allies, to turn to violence.

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Human rights and trade top Cook's agenda in Peking

China is sounding friendlier towards Britain than for years, with Hong Kong's transition deemed a success. So Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, arrives in the mainland today to a "fresh start".

Teresa Poole in Peking says this should make it easier for him to raise human rights issues.

Not for a long time has a visiting British Foreign Secretary arrived in Peking to find what counts in China as a charm offensive. Chinese officials speak of how it is time to draw a line under the "twists" that embittered the Sino-British relationship over Hong Kong, and they welcome the "new initiatives" shown by the British government.

It goes without saying that Peking finds this much easier with a new Labour government, whose ministers had no

role in the battles over Chris Patten's governorship of the former colony.

Mr Cook, who arrives in Peking this afternoon, will spend little more than 24 hours in the city before flying on to Hong Kong tomorrow evening. The meetings scheduled with his Chinese counterpart, Qian Qichen, and President Jiang Zemin are supposed to lay the foundations for "a sound and broadly-based relationship", say British officials.

It is Mr Cook's first visit in

the mainland as Foreign Secretary since the return of Hong Kong on 1 July last year. Last week, Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, arrived in Peking to what the Chinese prime minister, Li Peng, publicly called a "special welcome". Tony Blair is scheduled to visit later this year.

British officials insist Mr Cook will be "pursuing a dialogue on human rights" as well as emphasising a "broad trade agenda". They insist that the question of commerce and hu-

man rights "isn't an 'either/or'" and that Mr Cook is looking for a mixture of "dialogue, discussion, and practical action" on human rights.

With Britain holding the European Union presidency, Mr Cook has already said he would like the EU to adopt a common line on human rights in China. EU countries have to decide whether to back a new resolution condemning China at the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva in March, following the collapse

of a consensus last year [1997] when France and Germany broke ranks. This annual showdown, which has never succeeded against China, is much detested by Peking, and Chinese officials may use this visit to try to convince Mr Cook that it is counter-productive. Last week, in Washington, Mr Cook said the EU and the United States were still undecided over whether to back a new resolution.

China's view that this is the year for a new start for Sino-

British relations may, paradoxically, make Peking's leaders less touchy over Mr Cook's overtures for a human rights dialogue. The Foreign Secretary decided not to meet Wei Jingsheng, the leading Chinese dissident released in November, when he was in London earlier this month, something which will not have gone unnoticed in Peking.

At the moment Britain is stressing practical measures, such as training and educational programmes to improve the "rule of law" in China, includ-

ing bringing Chinese judges to the UK. Political prisoners, who can be sent for three years "re-education through labour" without so much as a trial, are not the only victims of China's legal system. There is little real justice for ordinary, accused criminals, who are often rounded up during anti-crime "crackdowns" and processed through the courts at alarming speed. Civil and commercial law is equally un dependable, as foreign companies operating in China have found to their cost.

Floods kill 86 in Kenya

Unseasonal downpours blamed by experts on the El Nino weather phenomenon are hammering Kenya's agriculture and tourism-based economy and striking further blows to the battered infrastructure.

Police say floods caused by the heavy rain have killed at least 86 people and caused the worst damage in Kenya's recent history. The *Sunday Standard* newspaper put the toll at 91.

The Kenya Television Network (KTN) said schools around the north-eastern town of Garissa were closed due to floods. The town was running short of food because trucks bringing in stocks were unable to complete the journey, it said.

KTN also showed footage from the Kano plains of western Kenya, where it said floods had forced hundreds of peasants to flee their grass-thatched houses and take refuge in schools and churches.

Police reported more bridges and roads damaged in Meru and other smaller centres in eastern Kenya - which has been worst affected by the torrential rains. They said the damage appeared to be the worst in the country's recent history.

In the capital Nairobi, the Eastlands district where a third of the city's 2 million population live, was without fresh water yesterday after a mains pipe snapped into two, apparently after heavy rains exposed it.

Kenya's vital link road between Nairobi and the port of Mombasa was open yesterday but heavy rains created one of the biggest traffic jams East Africa has ever seen.

— Reuters, Nairobi



Cold comfort: Russian women warm up by a fire after an icy swim in the Victory Park pond in St Petersburg yesterday to mark the Red Army liberation of the city 55 years ago; the swimmers, known as walrus, survived the 900-day German siege in which hundreds died

Photograph: Reuters

Serbs elect moderate

The election of a moderate Bosnian Serb government won prompt international support yesterday and set the stage for a final reckoning between Serb pragmatists and their hardline nationalist rivals.

The Bosnian Serb parliament broke new ground when it elected a coalition government led by Milorad Dodik, the pro-Western leader of the Independent Social Democrats. Mr Dodik's election was bitterly opposed by hardline nationalists, who boycotted the vote. The new prime minister was nominated by Western-backed Bosnian Serb President Biljana Plavsic, who has been waging a power struggle against the hardliners for months.

Carlos Westendorp, the international High Representative to Bosnia, hailed the new government as a step forward: "This is a government the international community can work with," his spokesman said.

Mr Dodik became the first politician in Bosnia to hold high office without links to one of the main nationalist parties which have dominated politics for the past seven years. He secured a majority by gaining support from Bosnian Muslim deputies who had been shunned by Serb nationalists.

The election of Mr Dodik's government followed months of United States-led pressure; Washington and its European allies accused the hardliners of obstructing efforts to build a stable peace in Bosnia.

Balkan analysts said Mr Dodik would soon be tested by the hardliners, who retain tight control over the police and local media in the eastern half of Serb territory.

— Reuters, Bijeljina

Mexicans enraged by massacre claim

Mexican human-rights groups expressed outrage yesterday over a statement by the country's attorney-general suggesting a pre-Christmas massacre of 45 Indian peasants was sparked by a family feud.

"The massacre was the result of the systematic violation of human rights" by armed men affiliated with the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), said Marielaire Acosta, of the Mexican Commission for the Defence and Promotion of Human Rights. She called for an impartial investigation by the Mexican Supreme Court. Gunmen in paramilitary uniform moved into the village of Atecal, in the state of Chiapas, on 22 December, when most menfolk were in the fields, killing 45 peo-

ple, mostly women and children. The villagers were known to be sympathisers of Zapatista guerrillas who have been seeking better treatment for Indian peasants in the state. Most of the 50 gunmen arrested were found to be affiliated to the PRI. The local mayor, from the PRI, is under detention for providing the weapons.

Attorney-General Jorge Madrazo, a government appointee, said at the weekend that a father avenging the murder of his son, five days earlier, may have triggered the massacre. "The murder was the last link in a chain of wrongs which the attackers felt they had suffered, including murders, kidnappings, the burning down of homes and threats."

Pro-PRI and pro-Zapatista Chiapans had clashed regularly over the past four years, often over land. The situation is complicated by the fact that many PRI supporters are members of newly founded evangelical churches, while local Catholic priests, mostly advocates of liberation theology, have backed the Zapatistas.

A report by Mexico's National Human Rights Commission left no doubt that PRI officials had helped plan the massacre, while police turned a blind eye. The report quoted a witness as saying he saw police first capture some of the gunmen, then release them, giving them back their weapons.

— Phil Davison
Latin America Correspondent

US jail figures up 5 per cent in a year

The United States prison population has increased by nearly 100,000 inmates to more than 1.7 million in the 12 months that ended last 30 June, the Justice Department reported.

The department's Bureau of Justice Statistics said in its annual report that the number of prisoners increased by more than 96,000, or nearly 5 per cent, from 1 July 1996 to 30 June 1997. At the end of June there were nearly 1.1 million state prisoners, more than 560,000 local jail inmates and more than 99,000 federal prisoners. The report said the steepest increase took place in local jails, which held about 9,100 juveniles.

The largest jail population was in Los Angeles County, with 21,900 inmates, followed by New York City with 17,500 inmates and Chicago's Cook County with more than 9,100 inmates.

Since 1990, the number of people in custody has risen by more than 577,100. The report found that one in 155 US residents was behind bars at mid-1997. The trend of more incarcerated criminals began in 1980. The report gave no reason for the increase, but experts have cited a number of factors, including tough new sentencing laws and more drug arrests.

— Reuters, Washington

Russian mine blast kills four

A methane gas explosion at a Russian coal mine in the arctic Vorkuta region killed at least four miners and injured five, while trapping about two dozen others inside the mine, officials said. By evening, hopes of finding the trapped miners alive was diminishing rapidly, the Interfax news agency said, citing local officials.

Russian coal mines, with their aging equipment and deteriorating safety standards, have been plagued by a string of accidents in recent months. In December, 67 miners were killed by a methane gas explosion in a mine in Siberia. Thirteen other miners were killed in separate accidents in 1997.

— AP, Moscow

Diamond town captured

Thousands of people are fleeing the Sierra Leone diamond town of Tonkolindu after its capture by heavily armed Kamajor hunters in a battle with troops loyal to the military government.

The traditional hunters took the town, a key source of government revenue, on Saturday after a two-week siege. Residents of the town headed for Kenema, the eastern capital, around 12 miles away, according to Diego Thoriksson, a Red Cross relief co-ordinator. The Kamajor oppose the junta that toppled president Ahmad Tejan Kabbah last May and have launched repeated attacks against the Sierra Leone army and former Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels who rallied to the coup.

— Reuters, Freetown

Nephew of King Fahd dies

Prince Abdullah bin Saud bin Abdul-Aziz, a nephew of King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, died on Saturday, a Royal Court statement said. He was 65. The statement said Prince Abdullah had suffered for a long time from an incurable illness, but it did not say what the illness was. The Prince was governor of the holy city of Mecca during the reign of his late father, King Saud, King Fahd's brother, who ruled from 1953 to 1964.

— AP, Riyadh

Pope appoints 22 'young' cardinals

Pope John Paul, putting perhaps one of his last stamps on the Roman Catholic Church, yesterday named 22 new cardinals, the elite group of prelates who can choose a new pontiff after his death.

The ceremony to consecrate them, known as a consistory, will be held on 21 February. It will be the Pope's seventh, and perhaps the last consistory of his reign, now in its 26th year.

With the new nominations, the Pope has named nearly 90 per cent of the 123 cardinal electors. This increases the possibility that his successor will be a conservative in his own image who will not change controversial Church teachings.

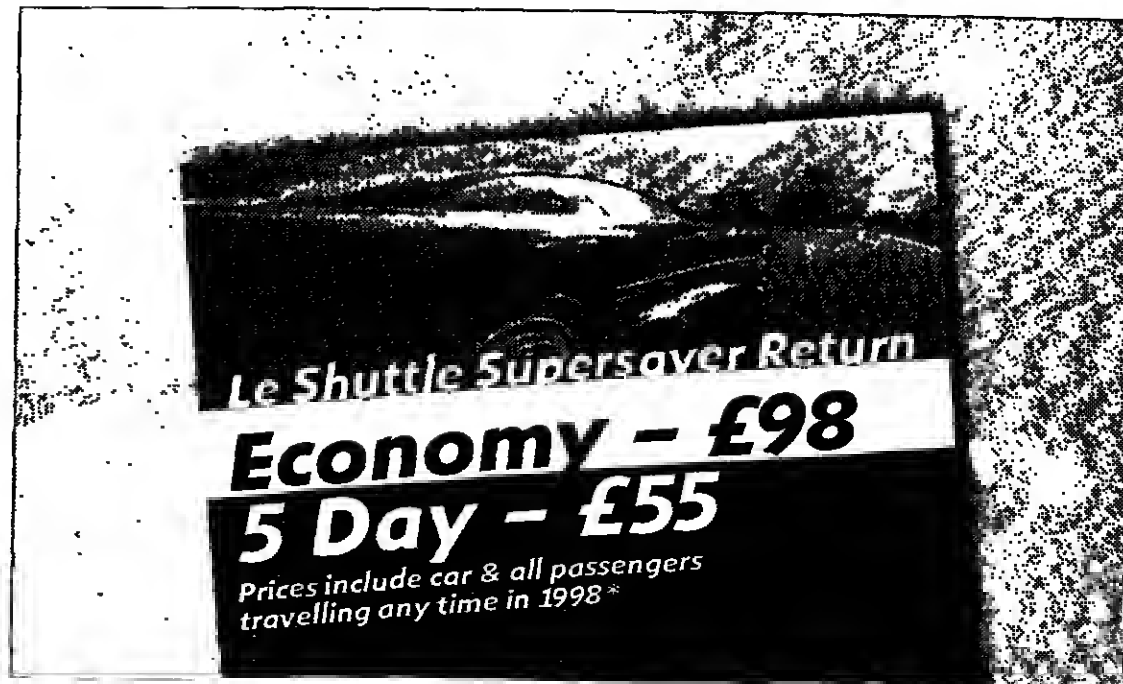
Some observers say the next pope may be chosen from those named yesterday because many existing cardinals are getting old. One of the rumoured "papabili" is Christoph Schoenborn, Archbishop of Vienna, 53.

The new cardinals include Francis Eugene George, Archbishop of Chicago; Archbishop Serafin Fernandes de Araujo of Belo Horizonte, Brazil; Archbishop Antonio Maria Rouco Varcia of Madrid; Archbishop Aloysius Matthew Ambrozic of Toronto, Canada and Archbishop Jean Balland of Lyon, France.

— Reuters, Vatican City

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Men with our thoughts on their minds

Our minds work the way they do because we have inherited our ancestors' genes, and the brain is an organ designed for computation. Steven Pinker explains his determinist vision to Jerome Burne, while Steven Rose argues that it's all a bit more complicated than that.

At first glance you might place him as a survivor from a Seventies rock band – good features, designer suit and a Roger Daltrey-style tumble of dark curls, now streaked with grey. But while the rock dinosaurs have long given up even the pretense of revolution, Steven Pinker has just written a manifesto whose aim is to storm some of the social sciences' most cherished bastions – that our minds are largely shaped by our culture, that parents mould their children's personality, that social factors decide our behaviour, that psychological problems are rooted in childhood. "I suppose I do line them up and mow them down" he says, imitating someone with a machine gun.

Not that he's remotely rabid. He's a psychologist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, but in another incarnation he might have been a successful analyst or chat-show host. He leans forward and nods encouragingly as you talk, as if to say "I understand what you're saying and it's really interesting".

When it comes to ideas though, he's very clear and utterly ruthless. His book *How the Mind Works* (Allen Lane £25) pulls together a broad sweep of recent research to present an explanation that many find very threatening, or (as Steven Rose argues below) badly misconceived.

Stripped to its bare essentials, his thesis comes in two parts. The first says that our mental life – the way we think, our feelings, our

'What genes determine are thoughts and feelings – not behaviour'

goals, our desires – is shaped by the pressures of evolution, just as much as our hands or our hearts. Our minds work the way they do because those of our ancestors whose minds also worked like that passed their genes on.

The second part is that there is nothing special or magical about the brain. It is an organ designed to do a job, just like the stomach or the lungs.

"Everyone accepts that the job of the heart is to push blood round the body," says Pinker, "and knowing that enables you to understand why it's engineered the way it is. But people still balk at accepting that the brain is an organ designed for computation. Now, that doesn't mean it's a computer. What it does mean, though, is that its job is to work out strategies that boost the chance of survival. These range from navigating around a 3-D world using 2-D information from the retina – an awesome feat



Stephen Pinker: His theory sees our 'mental life' as the legacy of previous generations and redefines the functions of the brain

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

by the way – to selecting the mate who gives you the best chance of passing on your genes."

One charge made by his critics is that evolutionary explanations are merely dressed-up "Just So" stories – genes predisposing to homosexuality stay in the population because those with them help to bring up relatives' children. "Good evolutionary explanations make very definite predictions," says Pinker. "I write about one that explains sickness during pregnancy."

"It predicts a number of features of morning sickness, such as when it should occur, how long it should last, what effect it should have and so on. All of which turn out to be true. There's also an evolutionary-based theory of short-term memory that successfully predicts data retrieval systems on a computer."

Not surprisingly, given the misuse of theories that explain human nature in terms of their genes, Pinker is frequently accused of promoting a version of genetic determinism, portraying us as the puppets of our genes. "I don't believe genes determine behaviour," he says. "What they do determine is the repertoire of thoughts and feelings that individuals then translate into behaviour, depending on their life history and situation."

"Genes are what evolution works with. If you accept evolution, then adaptation must have shaped our brains along with the rest of Nature." All told, a very reasonable revolutionary.

● Steven Pinker and Steven Rose will debate this issue on Wednesday at the Institute of Education, Gordon Square, London WC1. Call 0171-636-1577 for tickets.

Why Pinker is wrong: it takes more than dodgy genes to produce a compulsive shopper

Stephen Pinker claims that the mind is a computer-like information processor, built of a series of "modules" for different behaviours, such as language and lying, and that these have become wired into our brains and minds as part of our genetic heritage. I think he's wrong – for reasons I discuss in my books *The Making of Memory* and *Lifelines*. Let me explain why I think that.

First, minds and brains trade not in dead information, but in living meaning. For Pinker, a footprint in the sand "carries information". Wrong. It is the person viewing the footprint who ascribes meaning to it, derived from our evolutionary, developmental and cultural history. Think of the multiple meanings that viewing a footprint on his island seashore had for Robinson Crusoe.

Second, brains and minds aren't Swiss Army knives equipped with pull-out screwdrivers and bottle-opener modules, preformed in our genes; they develop dynamically and coherently as part of the constant interplay of specificity and plasticity that constitutes the living processes that create us. Neither behaviours, nor any other aspect of living systems, are embedded in individual "selfish genes".

DNA itself is actually rather an inert molecule (hence the plot of *Jurassic Park*). Without the web of enzymes and membranes in which the living cell embeds it, it couldn't function.

It isn't even the conductor of the cellular orchestra. Rather, like a well-practised concert quartet, each cellular element interacts harmoniously with all others without the need for a "master molecule".

The idea that our human capacities are frozen into presumed Stone Age habits (so-

called evolutionary psychology, which operates on the Flinstones principle that our ancestors shared the values and practices of American suburbia circa 1950) profoundly misunderstands the ways in which our biology and culture are entangled through evolution and history. Our brains evolved from the same structures that snakes use to analyse odours, but this doesn't mean that we think by smelling.

This is why the idea of "neurogenetic determinism" – which claims that we can trace

'Genetic determinism crudely turns complex social issues into tendencies embedded in the brain and genes'

everything from infanticide through sexual orientation, alcoholism, compulsive shopping, tendency to midlife divorce and street violence to the consequences of some fixed genetic processes – is so misguided.

Such determinism crudely turns complex social processes into "tendencies" embedded in the brain and genes, suggesting "violence" is to be understood by searching for the "genes which cause aggression" – and presumably treated by selective abortion or genetic engineering.

So why, if it is "in the genes", is homicide so much more common in the US than

in Europe? The 280 million handguns said to be in personal possession would seem a more likely part of the answer than any delving into genetics.

Genetic- and computer-fixed thinking about living processes in general, and human behaviour in particular, fundamentally misunderstands the rich interconnectedness of life and the multiple levels at which it must be understood.

What I find very odd about all this macho evolutionary talk is the extent to which, in the last analysis, it wants to have its cake and eat it. Evolutionary psychology argues that we are merely the deterministically driven products of our selfish genes and of their sole interest, replication. All our deepest desires and emotions, our abjectly selfish failures, as well as our most selfless ambitions to create a more beautiful world, are simply shadow-play.

To be sure, even its most vociferous exponents ultimately recoil from this bleak vision, and claim that they are (in some unexplained way) independent of their genes. But where does this autonomy come from?

It is time to go beyond false dichotomies of genes and environments, determinism and free will. We can't choose either our genes or the world we are born into, but it is precisely our genes – as part of the living, dynamic processes in which they are embedded – which enable us to transform that world.

Steven Rose is professor of biology and director of the Brain and Behaviour Research Group at the Open University.

Lifelines is published by Allen Lane in the UK and Oxford University Press in the United States

TECHNOQUEST

Juicy vitamins/ Killer paint/ Bigger snakes/ Apple pips

Questions for this column can be submitted by email to sci.net@campus.bt.com

Q How much vitamin C is found in pure orange juice?
A litre of orange juice contains about 300 milligrams of vitamin C, which is five times the recommended daily dose for adults.

Q In the film *Goldfinger*, one of the women was painted in a non-porous paint which killed her. Would this really happen?

Yes, for several reasons. Firstly, the skin is important for temperature regulation. We sweat constantly; it evaporates and removes heat from our bodies. Blood flowing near to the skin also loses heat as it is cooled by contact with the air. Without these two mechanisms, the body would overheat and we would die. Secondly, the skin can absorb substances applied to it – such as any toxins in a non-porous paint. These might be eliminated by the kidneys, or they might kill you. Thirdly, a non-porous paint would mean that the skin's waterproof surface layer would get waterlogged (like wearing a non-absorbent plaster for a while) and so be liable to infection. It might even start to fall apart.

Q Snakes continue to grow, although very slowly, throughout their lives. Did this also apply to dinosaurs?

Continual growth occurs in many reptiles, but is particularly noticeable in larger species of chelonians (turtles, tortoises) and crocodylians (crocodiles, alligators and gharials) as well as large lizards (such as monitor lizards). It is one reason why it is so difficult to be certain about the record sizes achieved by these creatures. Microscopic studies on bone from a wide range of dinosaurs indicate that it was probably universal among that group too.

Q Are apple pips poisonous? If so, how dangerous are they?

Apple pips actually contain cyanide, and you can be poisoned by them if you eat too many – though it would take about a cupful. You might be sick of apples by then.

Q Why do moths fly towards light?

Because they think it's the moon. Moths are used to navigating by the light of the moon – they fly keeping the moon on one side. When a bright, artificial light is present, they try to do the same thing but to keep it in a fixed position they end up flying round in circles. The brightness of the light disorients them and their orbits get smaller and smaller until eventually they hit the light.

Q Where does the word "atom" come from, and who first thought of it?

The word atom comes from the Greek for "not cut". The first person to think that atoms existed – that is, that everything was made up of combinations of some indivisible objects – was a man called Democritus who lived in Greece in 400 BC. He thought that atoms were the smallest things that could exist, and this was generally believed until the early part of this century.

You can also visit the technoquest World Wide Web site at <http://www.campus.bt.com/CampusWorld/pub/ScienceNet>

Questions and answers provided by Science Line's Dial-a-Scientist on 0345 600444

TELL ME ABOUT ... how we age

From the moment the human sperm mingles with the egg, the cells there can divide 100 times over. But eventually, even if we aren't hit by a bus or fall ill, everyone dies. Last Friday, a team of American scientists announced that they had found a way to make human cells in a test tube divide about another 20 times, the equivalent of living roughly one-fifth longer.

The way they did this was by investigating the telomere of the cells' DNA. The DNA inside our cell nuclei is arranged in 26 chromosomes, and each chromosome pair has a string of "base pairs" – the "letters" that make up DNA instructions – repeated over and over at their tail end. This is the telomere.

When a cell divides, the telomere shortens by roughly 65 base pairs. Eventually it shortens beyond a certain length. After this, the cell "refuses" to divide again. Instead it undergoes "programmed cell death", or apoptosis, which is the body's way of letting cells die quietly.

But you can make the telomere grow again, by applying an enzyme called telomerase. Our

own bodies generate it to reset the length of the telomere in the cells which become our gametes (sperm or eggs). Thus there is a gene which makes telomerase too.

The American scientists found out how to switch on the telomerase gene in normal cells, the cells kept on dividing, and the telomere didn't shorten.

They described this as the "cellular fountain of eternal youth". But other scientists doubt it. Telomeres do not tell the whole story about ageing. There are many more reasons why we get old, and telomeres aren't involved in all of them.

Nobody is completely sure why we age, though there are plenty of theories. It may be linked to rapidity of cell reproduction – animals with fast metabolisms tend to live less long. It is not about size: tortoises can live hundreds of years, whereas a giraffe only lives about 40 years at best.

Genes play a significant part: some are very useful when we are young but a positive drawback when you're older – for example, castrated men live about 17

years longer than other men, but (for obvious reasons) that's not a trait they can pass on to children. Genes which help us reproduce, but make us die early, will always be favoured by evolution over those that make us live longer.

(And simple logic demolishes the idea that telomerase is the secret of eternal life. If it were, then evolution has had plenty of time to produce somebody whose telomere never shortens. That person would be immortal. No immortals are known. QED.)

A more favoured theory of ageing suggests that it occurs because of accumulated damage to the machinery of our cells – especially their powerhouses, the mitochondria – caused by exposure to natural toxins and the effects of generating energy in the cell. That fits best with everything we know so far.

● Further reading: *"Why We Age"* by Steven Austad (John Wiley & Sons, £19.99).

The web site <http://www3.hmc.edu/~clewis/aging> contains some useful discussions of competing theories.

— Charles Arthur



Life begins ... and cells can divide 100 times over

THEORETICALLY ...

HIV vaccine trial/ A new form of ice/ Crystal-clear laptop screens/ Helpful genes

An anti-HIV vaccine has been given approval for large-scale trials involving 7,500 healthy volunteers. The tests, which are the first for an HIV vaccine, will test its effectiveness as a vaccine over three years. The trial was approved by the US Food and Drug Administration, and will cost \$20m (£12.5m), most of which has come from private sources. The vaccine, called gp120, is made by VaxGen of San Francisco. It is intended to confer immunity by alerting the body to a single sub-unit protein in the virus – though critics have said the idea is "a total waste of time and money".

Ice-nine was just a plot device for Kurt Vonnegut – remember the novel *Cat's Cradle*, in which the US Army devised a form of ice in which water froze at room temperature, and so destroyed the world? But now scientists at University College,

London, working with a team in Germany, have done something similar, taking the number of known "phases" of ice from 11 to 12. In the latest *Nature* they report that ice-XII seems to consist of "a mixture of five- and seven-membered water molecules". However, it is only found in conditions of between 0.2 and 0.6 gigapascals – about a thousand times greater than atmospheric pressure – and below -100C. So the world is safe, for now.

Laptop computer screens of the future could use carbon films with the properties of diamonds, to glow more brightly, reports *New Scientist*. Motorola has found that depositing a very thin carbon film behind the screen leads to energetic electrons being emitted which could make laptop screens appear much more sparkling. The carbon screens are also flat and cheap – and

they could be on the market in a couple of years, say the Motorola team.

Genes which don't seem to do anything positive to help an organism may actually confer some tiny advantage which in the long (evolutionary) run makes a difference, according to work by a team at the University of Utah. They took some yeast and made copies with randomly inserted foreign DNA. They then selected these "mutants" to find some which could withstand stressful environments (such as extreme temperatures). Yet when they put the mutants back in competition with the parent yeast, the parents generally survived better. Joe Dickinson, who led the work, reckons that's because genes that survive the long haul of evolution confer a tiny but real competitive edge – even if they don't seem to do anything on their own.

DEBORAH
TALKS TO
JULIE BUR

DINAH
HALL

13/INTERVIEW

DEBORAH ROSS
TALKS TO
JULIE BURCHILL

I meet Julie Burchill at the Sussex Arts Club, which seems to be Brighton's answer to the Groucho. She comes in with a shopping basket over her arm and a flocked, mustard-coloured headscarf tied tightly under her ample chin. She looks rather like a slatternly Mrs Tiggywinkle after a bad fall on to a squashy lipsticker. She is quite fat, yes, "but it's not the food, Deborah. It's the drink". Today, though, she orders just a grapefruit juice. "One without bits in, please," she requests in her strangely peeping, Minnie Mouse-meets-Bluebottle voice. Without bits in? Teeny girl voice? Julie was dazzlingly young - the girl of girls - when she first galloped into our lives as a rock journalist, smelling of danger and wickedness and speed and sex. Absurdly, at 38, I think she may think youth is still her secret.

Whatever, she doesn't smell wicked and wanton any more. Just gorgeous and rich. "You smell gorgeous and rich," I tell her. She peeps, "Thank you," then says she's come here via The Vanity Box, a perfume shop which is "just up the lanes, in the square. You should go and get yourself something nice, Deborah. Tell them you're a friend of Julie's. I spend a bloody fortune there." She has been mad about perfume, she says, ever since she used to try it on in Woolworths as a young girl growing up in Bristol. She always hated Bristol, and Weston-super-Mare down the road. Last year, she went back to Weston-super-Mare and, "wearing diamonds as big as love bites", she anointed herself with Joy ("the costliest scent in the world, Deborah") while riding the rickety land train along the seaford. "To go home in style is the greatest revenge of all," she says.

She is spectacularly hopeless with money. She's earned fortunes - £125,000 a year for such-and-such a newspaper column, £130,000 advance for such-and-such a book - and blown fortunes. "I never look at price labels. Someone once told me it was common. That and sending mixed coloured flowers. I have always lived very high. I bought a £1,500 Rolex. It didn't occur to me to get an Omega. I am to the Royal Bank of Scotland what The Duchess of York is to Coutts." She lives in a £250,000 house in Brighton with a swimming pool and "pool furniture, Deborah" and a pool boy called Adam who comes fortnightly and says: "Can I have a look at your boiler, Mrs Landesman?" She is often broke, she says, "but I'm over poor". She is into instant gratification in a big way. So what that she's never properly grown up? Good for her! On the other hand, if she doesn't mature soon I think she's pretty much had it.

Julie Burchill was brilliant once, truly rippled surfaces. At 17, she was the most famous rock critic in the land. Then, from the NME, she went on to work for *The Face* (where she was styled as Mad, Bad and Dangerous to read) followed by the *Mail* on *Sunday*, the *Sunday Times*, the *Sunday Express*, where, most would agree, she came over less mad, bad and dangerous and more caged beast that had been cynically put on show to spice things up a bit.

After two novels - the successful sex 'n' more sex blockbuster, *Ambition*, followed by the more experimental *No Exit*, which bombed spectacularly - she has now written her autobiography, *I Knew I Was Right* (Heinemann, £15.99). This is not her best work by a long chalk. It's tiresomely lazy and bloated and self-regarding. We hear a lot about Julie's "great, glittering brain" and "enormous talent". It's full of arrogance without insight. She claims to still write "like an angel on angel dust", which is patently untrue. She takes us back to her childhood by saying: "Scattered clues to my condition seem to glint like lethal, gleaming, gum-cutting coins in the pungent, com-



Don't worry, she might grow out of it

forting Christmas pud of my infancy as I look back in languor." If ever a pud was over-egged, it's this one. Editors have let her get away with it for too long, perhaps. It's a shame and a bit embarrassing. But if someone thinks they're the best, how do you go about telling them they can do better?

On one level she is hugely likeable. She is funny. "Tell me, the women who sleep with Robin Cook, what do they do for fun?" She is recklessly generous. When I confess I've never bought a grown-up perfume, am still a hopeless, foul-smelling, impulse sort of person, she up-ends her shopping basket and insists I have all the perfume samples given to her by The Vanity Box. "Take them! Take them!" She has opinions about everything. Tellytubbies are good. "If you don't like the Tellytubbies, you don't like life." Bridget Jones is not so good. "I hear they're making a film of the diaries. Ohhh.

'I can't even imagine what guilt feels like. I'm beginning to think it doesn't even exist'

I'm on the edge of my seat ... will she or won't she have that cake? Most attractively, she draws you into her own, invented world. Whose career could be saved by Tarantino? Debbie Reynolds? Yes, we decide. Keith Chegwin's? Possibly not. Christopher Bigsby's? I think no, she thinks yes. "He was actually very good as the randy vicar in *Poldark*," she declares. I say I had my first big crush on Captain Poldark. She looks at me with terrifying disdain, then says: "Well, for those who like that kind of thing, that's the kind of thing they like."

Yes, she is rather scary. Not because while she was growing up a working-class Stalinist in Bristol I was getting ready for ballet with Miss Brass over the Golders Green Odeon. Or while she was doing speed and turning down sex with Marc Bolan. I was anxiously waiting for the next installment of *Poldark*. No, she scares me because there is something not quite right about her, as if she is horribly damaged in

some way. She says in her book: "If I am in a position in which I must choose to pursue my own pleasure and thereby break one or more innocent hearts and lives of those close to me, or to forgo that pleasure and keep the hearts and lives of loved ones intact, there simply is no choice. In such a scenario I feel literally no one matters but me." If this is true, just how much of a monster is she?

Certainly, she's lived her life as if it were true. She effectively abandoned Bobby, her first son, when he was five, and didn't see him for years. She left her first husband for her second, then her second for Charlotte Raven, the 27-year-old, dark Marxist beauty who is currently editor of Julie's recently relaunched magazine, *The Modern Review*. While still having an affair with Charlotte, she started sleeping with Charlotte's younger brother, Daniel, 25. "Oh, terribly treacherous, but there you go," Charlotte found out and was not happy, obviously. She and Charlotte had a big bust-up, but are now friends again. "She's terribly dignified and broad-minded." She is still sleeping with Daniel, who lives nearby and "works with old people". She's had three abortions since they first got together. Three? "I thought I was too old to get pregnant." And you thought that three times? "Yeah, must have," Julie, that's just stupid. Ever heard of contraception? "It's a good day out," she says.

Does she ever feel guilt? She says not. "I can't even imagine what it feels like. I'm beginning to think it doesn't even exist, that it's just a social convention, like punting your hand to your mouth when you cough." Does she ever get hurt? "I don't like it when people say I'm finished. No one likes to hear that. But I don't get stabs of pain. I never get wounded. It's completely outside my experience. Do you?" Yes, I say, "Poor you," she says, with even greater disdain, before adding: "There is a lot to be said for having only a narrow range of emotions." She would like, I think, for me to describe her as the media world's answer to Rose West. Rose West? Possibly. But only in the sense she's buried whatever gift she once had under the patio. Dig it up, Julie, dig it up!

"I don't give a toss about anything," she says. "I'm a psychopath," she boasts. But, that said, she recently fought for the custody of her second son, Jack, now 11, and lost. She was extremely cut up, by all ac-

counts. All she will say is: "It cost me £30,000. I never had a nanny," but there are tears in her eyes.

Her father, whom she has always worshipped, worked in a distillery and was a communist and prominent trade unionist. Her mother made cardboard boxes in a factory. Julie was an only child, probably because she was so weird her parents didn't dare have another one, she says. She was "a prodigy", could read at three, was on to Nabokov and Graham Greene by 12. By that time, she was also "the best shoplifter in my year". The first book she ever lifted was Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunoia*, which she thought brilliant. She doesn't rate Greer now, though. "She's full of loathing and envy for young women. Same with Fay Weldon. They're so mousy, always carping about the Spice Girls. Why can't they pass on the baton gracefully?" "Why can't you?" I ask. "Bridget Jones is very popular, you know." "Please. I met Helen Fielding at a party once. She said: 'Julie, my biological clock is really ticking.' So I said to her: 'Well bloody stop it then, you silly cow.' God, so trivial." What's important, then? "Like Freud said, love and work."

As a child, she seemed to have disciples rather than friends. "While they liked playing Twister and Space Hoppers, I used to make them dress up with me, put on high heels, smoke cigarette sweets and drink red Corona, pretending it was pink champagne." Some might say she still has disciples rather than friends - the younger the better, it seems. Love and work, but better still when they love your work.

She was, she says, a very fearful child. What frightened her? "Everything," she replies. "The sun coming up ... everything." She couldn't leave the house without going through a furniture-touching ritual - "first the sofa, then the armchair, then the door handle". It made her feel safe, somehow. She was frightened of her periods, when they began at 13. She wouldn't let anyone know that she'd started. Then, for two years, she took her soiled sanitary towels and locked them in the wardrobe in her bedroom. She kept the key around her neck. When the wardrobe could take no more, she ran away to London. Her parents, alerted by the stench no doubt, broke the wardrobe open and had, she thinks, a midnight bonfire. She imagines they were "mortified" but doesn't know for

sure because they've never discussed it. Why did she do it? "I was just weird."

Determined to be a writer from the off, at 17 she got a job on the NME by responding to an advertisement for "hip young gunslingers". There, she met Tony Parsons, now a *Mirror* columnist, to whom she lost her virginity.

"A nasty, brutish, short shag, as though someone had trodden heavily on my toe," she writes with glee. Still, just after her 18th birthday, she married him. She can't now imagine why. "Maybe it was because I was programmed to marry. Perhaps that was my one streak of conventionality. She ended up pregnant in a flat in Billericay. 'Billerica! I tell you, there wasn't even a café on the high street because it was thought that if you wanted a cup of tea, you should bloody well go home and make one.' She rarely went out because, she claims, Tony wouldn't let her. "I was so clever and fan-

'I don't take crap from children. You don't do them any favours when you do'

tastically pretty he was scared of me running off with someone else."

She stayed in and did drugs. Speed mostly, everything bar heroin. She doesn't any more, she says. When you're older, you can't take it. She's not an alcoholic, no. "I never drink on my own. Only with friends. Then, the sky's the limit. If you're going to have fun, you might as well have fun." Anyway, Tony's fear was prophetic, because the first time they went out to a party together, when Julie was 24, she met the writer Cosmo Landesman and ran off with him. She has always had a thing about Jews, she says. "They're just so bright and talented and good down there." Yet, Julie, you idolise Stalin, who wasn't exactly keen on them. "True. But I still say he was the man for the job at the time." Marriage to Cosmo wasn't as great as she thought it was going to be. The trouble with living with Jews, she says, "is they don't half nag".

Anyway, she told Tony she was going to visit her parents, then never came back. She

left Bobby, then five. "I felt weepy at the station, but then I thought, this is a bit pathetic, like Celia Johnson in *Brief Encounter*. So you put on more lipstick and walk into the sunset. Like all callous people, I can cry very easily. I can cry at Frosty the Snowman, but I don't cry through self-pity."

She didn't see Bobby again until recently, when he suddenly turned up asking if he could live with her. She was thrilled. It hurt Tony enormously, she says. No, Bobby's never asked her why she left him. "And, if he did, I wouldn't answer. I don't take crap from children. You don't do them any favours if you do."

The thing about Julie, I think, is that you have to accept she just is, and that there may be no clues whatsoever glinting from the Christmas pud of her infancy. Some people are just born askew, and she may be one of them. She seems incapable of maintaining friendships. She has spent large chunks of time without her children. She surrounds herself with people who worship her, but never challenge. She thinks as long as you own up to mistreating others, it makes it okay. She would like, I think, to be taken seriously as a kind of contemporary Dorothy Parker, but isn't. There seems to be an emptiness at the heart of her life, just as there is at the heart of her writing. It may be time for her to mature into something else. If she can. Unless she starts owning up to what she feels. I doubt she'll ever mature either as a person, or as a writer. It's just all going to be hollow. Somewhere along the line, I think, she swapped true talent for a controversialist tie. Perhaps she just got too old and fat and rich and posh-smelling to cut it any more. I hope not, but it's a possibility.

Anyway, she has to go because she has another interview to do, plus she's working on a book about Diana and has to deliver shortly, so needs to get home to write. "You must come to one of my pool parties. Third Sunday of the month throughout the summer," she says, before pointing me in the direction of The Vanity Box. Emboldened, I do go in. I end up with Organza by Givenchy, the first grown-up perfume I've ever owned, and which, at £38.50, is rather more expensive than Impulse but a step in the right direction, I am assured. So, in short, I come away from Julie feeling happy and smelling divine. Which is more than can be said for most, perhaps.

Machohood versus materialism: the boy hedges his bets

DINAH
HALL

Thank you letters are still trickling in from Christmas, giving me a marvellous opportunity to compare composition, syntax and creative genius amongst the nieces and nephews. A spelling mistake from the private school ones can put me in a good mood for the rest of the year. Mindful that the recipients of my children's thank you letters are probably doing the same, I usually stand over them, urging them to more ambitious statements than "it will be useful".

This year, however, they dashed them off before I had a chance to doctor the contents. My mother-in-law, Granny

White Hair (I can't think why she objects to the name - it is a perfectly logical way of distinguishing her from my mother, Granny Black Hair, who doesn't mind at all - in fact it was she who thought them up) rang to say she had had some delightful letters but next time she would prefer a less formal signing off than "yours sincerely" followed by their initials and surname. She doesn't seem to appreciate that from 11- and 13-year-old boys "yours sincerely" represents a positive tidal wave of emotion.

Saying goodbye to his god-

mother at the airport after her annual visit required an even more uncomfortable show of sentiment for the 11-year-old. Should he lodge the kiss and thus deny himself the benefit of future godmotherly largesse or does he proffer his cheek and sacrifice his machohood on the altar of material goods? In the event, of course, he screwed his eyes tight shut, held his breath and plumped for the latter - he was taking no chances, as his godmother was showing alarming signs of taking the official side of her job too seriously.

He had more than once had

to politely turn down her offer to escort him to church, but more worrying than that, she had taken to quoting from some Good Godmother's Guide such truths as "time spent with the godchild is more valuable than any gift".

But the ultimate dilemma for the modern boy came when he had to decide whether to accompany me and his patron into the departure hall. I couldn't understand why he was hesitating as his godmother is well known for tipping small boys who carry her bags. Perhaps he wanted to negotiate the rates first? But no, as he shift-

ed uncomfortably from foot to foot, he confessed that he was worried that "people might think he had lesbian mothers". Of course, I told him not to be so silly, and that he must stop looking at life as another episode of *Friends*. Which is ironic really as my friend was meeting up with her estranged husband and his lover at the airport. The lover was a dead-ringer for Roger Whitaker.

With the rest of my children already in possession of knowledge I only acquired in my twenties, it's no wonder I've

found letting go of my baby, now at full-time school, so difficult. Anyway she is doing fine - with the help of ice packs. Schools are not allowed to administer anything stronger than water for children's ailments these days, so ice packs are used as universal panaceas, and my daughter will stop at nothing to get one. Imaginary rashes, bruises, headaches, nausea, sore throats, suspected broken legs - all require the infant drug of choice. Currently she's on six a week but we're hoping to gradually reduce her dependency as term progresses.

STYLE

Our new-look style page, bringing you the best of fashion, architecture and design, will appear on Thursday

Stop this nonsense, Mr Brown, you are not the best leader we never had



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The partial breakdown in the relationship between the Prime Minister and the Chancellor is serious, and damaging both to the Government and the country. On the face of it, it is so remarkable that Tony Blair should have been forced to rebuke his friend and ally in yesterday's newspapers that it is tempting to believe it must be an optical illusion in the world of smoke, mirrors and spin that is modern high politics. But there can be little doubt that Mr Blair wanted it known that he has lost patience with Gordon Brown's "psychological flaws" and his "daft and ill-advised" venture into vanity publishing, to repeat two of the most derogatory phrases attributed yesterday to those speaking on the Prime Minister's behalf.

This is the closest to a public dressing-down that can be administered without actually going public. It followed a pointed reminder to the Cabinet last week of the virtues of unity, and the announcement that Mr Blair would himself take the chair

of a new welfare reform committee, with Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, rather than the Chancellor, filling in his absence.

It says a great deal about the state of the relationship between Nos 10 and 11 Downing Street that Mr Blair should have calculated that it was better to expose division at the heart of government than to allow Mr Brown's blatant self-promotion to go unchallenged.

Arguments over the busy buzzing of Mr Brown's supporters may seem like the small change of politics. Individually, the charges laid against the Chancellor by the Blairites are petty. He allowed a television documentary to be made about his role in Labour's election victory. He let it be known that he regarded himself as prime minister to "president" Blair: while the sweet phrases came from No 10, the serious choice to "co-operate" with Paul Rountledge over his biography, which laid bare his con-

tinuing resentment over the Labour leadership contest of 1994.

It was this last that could not be ignored. It does not matter, except as an indicator of his poor grasp of political reality, that Mr Brown thinks he could have beaten Mr Blair in the contest for the Labour leadership, and hence the premiership. What matters is the persistent and public hawking of this belief. The Chancellor claims he did not discuss the leadership contest with Mr Rountledge. This is not true. In an interview in the Treasury he uttered these words which, as his biographer noted, said it all: "The newspapers, with a few notable exceptions, did not back me - not least because I was out of fashion. I was never part of the London scene anyway. But that did not in my view mean much, once the campaign started among ordinary Labour Party members and indeed backbench MPs."

By publicly coveting his neighbour's job, and apparently regretting his decision to pull out of the contest four years ago, the

Chancellor puts himself in the wrong. More than simply coveting the premiership, the book makes it clear that Mr Brown still blames Mr Blair's supporters for plotting against him to deny him his rightful reward. Again, it does not matter whether he is right. If Mr Brown thinks that his past resentment is more important than the task in hand, he is a smaller person than he thinks he is.

If the Chancellor really were the figure of stature which Mr Blair has always generously maintained he was, he would have said loudly and often: "Tony Blair is the Prime Minister I could not have been. We owe the scale of our election victory to him and I will do all I can, publicly and privately, to support him for as long as he wants me to."

The danger in this government was never going to be simply disagreement over policy. The truth is, you could barely persuade a cigarette paper to slide between Messrs Blair and Brown on the issues that

really matter. When the Tory splits started, it was damaging not just because they disagreed, but because they had grown to dislike and distrust each other, and so could not resolve their dispute.

Both Mr Blair and Mr Brown would like us to believe that their relationship is still strong enough to resolve differences. Indeed, it would have been a lot better for Mr Blair if he had told his advisers to hold their fire this weekend. But the speed with which this crisis has blown up (and he is no doubt, it is a crisis) does not inspire confidence. Although Mr Blair's irritation should have been kept within his circle, and addressed only to Mr Brown himself, it is not up to the Prime Minister to end this row. Mr Brown needs to give ground, openly and graciously. Above all, he needs to realise that his tactics are counterproductive. Not only are they undermining his prospects of realising the Government's best hopes, his own leadership prospects are weakening by the day.

Post letters to Letters to the Editor
and include a daytime telephone number.
Fax 0171 293 2036; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk
E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address.
Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

LETTERS

Free us from our cars

Sir: All the signatories of this letter are pensioners and all are very green about the environment. We have listened to more than one discussion about reducing the use of cars in which there has been no mention of the special problems of the elderly. Our cars are our prams. Neither cycling nor walking are alternatives for us.

We cannot reduce the use of cars unless changes are made to meet our circumstances. Three such changes need not be costly to the taxpayer and will also provide new jobs for the less skilled young unemployed.

If we are to use the train instead of our cars, we need porters to help us and our luggage up and down stairs, and to and from platforms and on and off trains. We see no difficulty in this being paid for by a ticket bought at the same time as the train ticket - the present charge at Heathrow is £5. We assume this service would be run by Railtrack and suggest that it should be properly salaried with the prospect of promotion within the organisation, that the uniform should be designed to inspire respect, and the job renamed - "rail stewards" perhaps?

If we are to use public transport on the roads, buses must get back their conductors to help us on and off and give security against crime.

Pedestrian areas in cities are fine for the environment but not for the elderly. We need some form of cycle huggy or rickshaw to operate in these areas, limited to holders of cards similar to the orange badge for car drivers. Buggies could be hired out to athletic young people who would be licensed to operate them.

All these proposals would also benefit the disabled and though some outlay by the Government would be needed, the services would be mainly paid for by the users.
Dame ALIX MEYNELL;
Sir HAROLD and ELKE
ATCHERLEY; HADLEY and
HEATHER BUCK; PATRICIA
CLIVE; KATHERINE
COATES; DIANA COLLINS;
ROSEMARY GOYDER;
SUSAN HICKLIN; PAMELA
JOHNSON; JAMES and DITTA
KERR; JACQUELINE and
YOOP KRAMERS; ETHEL
MURRAY; MAUREEN
NEEDHAM; ALEC and
ANGELA STRAHAN; BASIL
and JENNY STREET;
MONICA VINTERS; JOHN
and MARIETTA WHEATON
Lavenham, Suffolk



Fright at the opera

Sir: While the business community would have us believe there is nothing one of their own couldn't run better than the incumbents, Sir Colin Southgate's remarks about opera goers in shorts show the need for tact in a senior public arts role ("New Royal Opera chief aims to keep out the riffraff", 16 January).

Opera audiences are already full of businessmen who care more about their fellow punters than the music, and now it seems opera management is going the same way. People who can afford £25 to watch Arsenal FC may be able to afford opera tickets, and may even smell and wear singlets, shorts and trainers. Most music lovers can't and don't.

The staggering public subsidies provided for opera in the capital should go towards providing a service for the public, not just yawning, coughing expense-account business parties.

Fresh audiences could be just what London's opera needs to dig itself out of its dreadful hole.
TOM PEER
London SW11

Sir: The Royal Opera House has been subsidised for many years, in a largely fruitless bid to make it more accessible to a wider public. However, Sir Colin Southgate clearly dislikes the wider public's dress code. Fair enough then, Sir Colin, how about this? No singlets and smelly shorts, no subsidy. Let's see what that will do for the £5m deficit.

Oh, and should I ever go to an Arsenal home game, I must remember to wear black tie. After all, there are standards.
GRAHAM LEACH
Ilford, Essex

Sir: You state (leader, 17 January) that "the core principle, that there should be public subsidy [of the arts] is unassailable". When I was asked a few weeks ago to give a talk to fi-

nal year arts administration degree students, I found that not one of them could give me a reason as to why the state should subsidise the arts. When those who are responsible for the spending of public money on arts activities have no social or aesthetic rationale for what they do one wonders on what that "core principle" is based.
LUKE DIXON
London W7

Asthmatic houses

Sir: I am surprised not to see discussions in the press on two likely causes of asthma (report, 9 January; letters, 14, 17 January).

One is the excessive use of solvent-based chemical treatments in houses for rising damp. As an architect, I keep coming across situations where surveyors are covering themselves against any claim by saying that chemical treatments may be advisable. This is then changed by ill-informed mortgage lenders into an imperative:

"We will not give you a mortgage unless this treatment is carried out."

This often results in multiple treatments, one each time a property changes hands. The time will come when substantial claims will be made against mortgage lenders for insisting on unnecessary treatments that may have damaged peoples' health.

The second possible cause is the aggressive perfumes that manufacturers of household detergents, cleaners, polishes and so on add to their products in the mistaken belief that we need to be able to smell them to know that they are working. These nasty smells are getting worse all the time as manufacturers constantly tweak their products.

I used to visit a house where a teenager suffered badly from asthma. Every time I crossed the threshold I was met by a strong blast of fabric softener.
PATRICIA A TUTT
Peel, Isle of Man

Pigs with names

Sir: Paul Valley's analysis of the Tamworth Two saga is surely wrong ("How the flying pigs became a cracking good tale", 17 January). The reason why the third, anonymous pig was "processed in the usual way" was not that it didn't have a name but that it didn't escape from the abattoir. Its two companions were given names after, and because, they got away.

In doing so they displayed an ingenuity, courage and lust for life and liberty that came as a bit of a revelation, perhaps, to people who had been encouraged - by the food industry, the scientific community, even the church - to regard farm animals as things.

Perhaps the names they were given were a device to deal with that discovery - not so much a way of saying, "Hey, they're not so different from us," as of saying, "Of course, they're not just ordinary pigs." Otherwise, we might be driven to the

conclusion that all pigs are intelligent, gutsy creatures who would much rather we didn't eat them, thank you - and that's a thought that sentimental British carnivores can't handle.
HUW SPANNER
Harrow, Middlesex

Drugs and MEPs

Sir: Your article (16 January) on a European Parliament report on drugs is misleading. A large number of MEPs, including Labour members, had serious reservations about the report, as they do not believe its proposals will help in the fight against drugs. That is why a majority of MEPs from a wide range of political groups and nationalities voted for the report to be sent back to the European Parliament Civil Liberties Committee for further consideration.

WAYNE DAVID MEP
Leader of the European
Parliamentary Labour Party
Cardiff

Smoking in the pub

Sir: I am the landlady of a busy and smoky pub. The idea that smoking can be banned ("Public backing for smoking bans", 13 January) is quite alarming, as I am sure it would be damaging to my trade.

People have a choice whether or not they enter my pub. I make business decisions based on what my customers require. My customers, in the main, wish to smoke and those that don't make the choice to drink with their smoking friends. I do not need people who are not my customers, or for that matter the Government, to tell me what my customers can and cannot do in my pub.
J FRIZZELL
Trindon Colliery, Co Durham

Late trains

Sir: Your report (16 January) that more trains are running late since privatisation will come as no surprise to those who have to use them. However what we are not told is the number of passengers who arrive late.

Trains are officially "late" if they arrive more than five minutes late at their final destination. Trains are often scheduled to have quite leisurely waits at intermediate stations, to allow for lost time. Thus a passenger can well arrive at his station ten minutes late but the train will be within the deadline at the end of its journey, and will not be counted as late.

If a connection is missed because one train is late at an intermediate station, the passenger can well be delayed by an hour or more; yet it is likely that none of the trains involved will be counted as "late".
Dr ARTHUR TARRANT
Twickenham, Middlesex

Fear of recession

Sir: Hamish McRae discusses (column, 14 January) the possibility of a recession. What precautions would he suggest for individuals to take, to minimise harmful effects? If those actions were widely applied, would the overall result be to increase the chance of an early deep recession, in the same way that actions in anticipation of a devaluation make it more likely that a large devaluation will soon occur?
GORDON PACKMAN
Glasgow

If we could just progress this headline please to impact the reader eyeball to eyeball



MILES KINGSTON

I received a letter the other day from someone I had tentatively agreed to write a piece for, and who now wanted to make the whole thing definite. However, that is not the expression he used, "to make it definite". Nor did he use another expression which I always find odd, "to firm it up". He actually used an expression which I had never heard before. "Please can we now progress the article?"

I did not know that "progress" could be used as a transitive verb, that you could actually "progress" something. And of course you can't. At least you couldn't. But it only takes someone brave enough (or ignorant enough) to ignore the impossibility and actually

DO it, and turn a noun into a verb, and after that it only takes enough people to think it is a useful usage, for it to catch on.

There must have been a time, for instance, when "process" was only a noun. The first time it was used as a verb meaning to put something through a process, lots of people must have shuddered, but now it has become a useful little verb, and if someone says to me that they are going to process my application, I don't flinch. Well, I do, but that's only because I know that any processing of any application takes a long time.

"Access" as a verb I still find hard to take, however. The other day I heard someone on

the radio saying that it was always very helpful for immigrants when they came to a new country if they could "access" the language of the host culture, and I still cannot see why "access" is better than "talk" or "understand". It's lazy computer jargon, I'm afraid.

I also dread the phrase "to impact on", which only means "to affect". And I still worry about the word "source", which seems to be a useless alternative to "get" or "obtain". "How do you source your supplies?" is surely no better than, "Where do you get your supplies from?" and twice as pretentious. Not long ago on *The Food Programme* on Radio 4 I heard someone - not, I hope, the great Derek Cooper - asking a chef:

"How do you source your ingredients?" and it didn't seem to occur to anyone on the programme that all the audience must have heard it as, "How do you source your ingredients?"

Well, we all have our hate phrases. Gillian Reynolds wrote the other day, after listening to a discussion on the Millennium Dome, the so-called "People's Dome", that the phrase that made her gorge rise was not anything to do with Millennium or Dome but any phrase beginning with "people's" - "People's Princess", "people's choice" and so on.

Paul Dickson actually took the trouble to write down in 1983 a whole list of clichés and clapped-out phrases which bothered him, and the horri-

ing thing is that most of them are still current. Bill Bryson is not the first American to be funny and to write books about language: Paul Dickson has been doing it for years. In 1983 Arena Books published a paperback of his called *Words* which listed lots of his favourite words. One chapter, for instance, was a list of expressions for being drunk: 2,331 of them, in fact. The first man who ever listed words for being drunk was Benjamin Franklin, says Dickson, and he managed 228 in 1733, so we have progressed since then in some ways.

But the chapter I want to draw your attention to is the one called "Junk Words", in which Dickson lists his own per-

sonal hate list of "buzzwords" which have lost their glitter, clichés which have gone beyond the point of usefulness. Here is a short selection made by me, not at random, but on purpose to show that it takes a long time for buzzwords to vanish after their sell-by date.

"Absolutely, at this point in time, back burner, ball-park figure, hit the bullet, bottom line, can of worms, communicate, community, craft (noun & verb), decasulise, disadvantaged, eyeball to eyeball, feedback, first the good news... free lunch, fully cognisant, game plan, go for it, hang a left, humorous, impact (as a verb), input, interface, low profile, matrix, meaningful dialogue, modular, ongoing, outreach,

overview, peer group, piece of the action, prior to, role model, seminal, task force, touch base with, within the context of..."

Now, I am not saying that none of these expressions is useful, though I cannot imagine myself wanting to use any of them. What I would maintain, along with Dickson, is that they are all worn-smooth clichés. And what is horrifying is that he made this list in 1982, when the book first appeared in America. Yes, 16 years ago these expressions all seemed hackneyed and they are all still as common as cold germs. If the test of a culture is to come up with new clichés, then we are performing very badly.

Not quite A Wonderful Life, but a whole lot better



POLLY TOYNEBEE
IN PRAISE OF
CREDIT UNIONS

For all too many families this is the darkest month, the month of reckoning. The Teleubbies and the Spice dolls have been bought and discarded by now, but the bills linger on and on. For poor families, Christmas is a calamity that can sink their shaky finances. Whatever sacrifice it takes, however poor they are, the one badge of clinging to mainstream life is for their children to have a Christmas more like that of their richer classmates, far beyond the means of a penurious life on Income Support.

The debts start to mount now exponentially. Providential Financial, one of the main door-to-door small loans companies, charges an annual interest rate of some 164 per cent. (If debtors had bank accounts, a bank loan would cost around 15 per cent.) Loan company interest charges often far exceed the original sum by the time (if ever) they are paid off. Nigel Griffiths, the consumer affairs minister, has said that he will do something about the loan companies' habit of raising interest rates when debtors fall into arrears. That would help, but there is something the Government should do urgently that would transform the finances of the poor and the prosperity of whole poor communities: Labour should sow the seed-corn to set up a nationwide network of credit unions.

Credit unions are small co-operatives, starting with as few as 20 people, mainly run by volunteers, with virtually no overheads, which take in very small savings and lend out money on low interest rates, never exceeding 12.6 per cent a year. Anyone who can manage to save a minimum of £5 a month for at least 13 weeks is then entitled to draw out a loan, if the committee running the credit union deems them credit-worthy enough. Many people have no collateral, and it works on trust and community. Astonishingly, credit unions have only 1 per cent bad debts, although they may lend to people with nothing. Those falling behind are summoned before the committee to plead their case, and have their problem sorted out.

What bank offers the community service of the credit union in Lewisham? A grandmother came knocking on the door of one of the committee members at 10pm on Christmas Eve desperately needing to withdraw £50 of her credit union savings, and he advanced her the money there and then. Imagine he was James Stewart, and anyone who this Christmas wept over the re-released *It's a Wonderful Life* will understand what this is all about: little people banding together to fight off the depredations of the ruthless big financial institutions.

Take another typical Lewisham example. One man saved for four years and came to the union to take out his savings to pay a £400 car repair bill. The credit union suggested

that, instead, he should take out a loan and pay it back over a year, so he would still have his £400 plus interest at the end. The loan for a year cost him just £26.75.

Imagine if every single small community had its own credit union, a network of people's banks. The money comes in and often goes out to local community enterprises, helping to create employment as the bank grows. It is a highly effective way of creating a sense of community, since it is run by local amateurs with a bit of training, and reaches out to draw local people together. It was, of course, from these small mutual beginnings that the building societies began, now alas mainly converted into ordinary commercial banks, with surprisingly little complaint at this destruction of the mutual idea.

There are around 200,000 members of Britain's existing 645 credit unions – not many considering the need. Some are large employee credit unions, run for those working in local authorities, trade unions, British Airways, British Aerospace; there is even one for employees of Lloyds Bank. Many are run within schools for the local community, open to pupils and parents. Some are run by pupils learning vital skills, such as a group of primary pupils at the John Randall School in Telford who collect up to £100 a week from other children. Even the smallest 20-person credit union is rigorously supervised by a government agency, scrutinising their accounts every month.

The launch of the Government's over-hyped ISA savings scheme was more razamatazz than substance. No one has the slightest idea whence they plucked the figure of six million expected new poor savers. There is nothing very special about ISAs, except for the fact that savings can be paid in at supermarket check-outs. The real and sensible purpose was to dismantle Peps and Tescos that did less to help the poor and a great deal for the rich. The populist hit was just an excuse. After all, who are all these people who don't save now, but would? There's been no shortage of people keen to take in savings. The poor non-savers are those who need credit unions, so that they can borrow in a crisis without falling into the hands of loan sharks.

If the Government really cares about the poor, then credit unions are what they should go for. Britain is far behind other countries in their development. American law has encouraged their growth by forcing banks to set one up in their wake every time they close a branch. In Britain, banks are closing branches everywhere, and many outlying housing estates have never had access to one. A similar law here would have made a crucial difference over the past decade. Ireland has a mass of credit unions, holding £2bn assets; Britain's hold only £100m.

The start-up costs for even the smallest credit union are around £4,000, covering the training of volunteers by ABCU, the association of credit unions. Leaflets have to be printed to draw in a community, local advertising bought and contracts printed for every loan and transaction. So far funds to set them up have come from urban regeneration money or from European social funds and sometimes from local authorities who are allowed to start them. It is a one-off set-up charge, with no danger the credit union will ever come back cap-in-hand for more, and extraordinarily good social value for money. Now is the time of year for the Government to organise start-up money to local authorities and Citizens Advice Bureaux.

Anyone interested in starting a credit union should call ABCU on 0161 832 3694

An episode of low farce – and the highest tribute to American justice



JOHN CARLIN
ON THE PAULA JONES CASE

As we chortle at the predicament of the commander-in-chief of the mightiest nation on earth, as we snicker over his "distinguishing characteristics", as we gasp at the impudence of his twittish accuser and the quirky little gang of fame-seeking charlatans who spur her on, let us also – without risk of contradiction – take off our hats and marvel. Let us raise a glass to the land of opportunity, the home of individual rights.

For while, yes, Paula Jones' sexual harassment suit against Bill Clinton is indisputably an episode of low farce, an ignominious moment in the history of the US presidency, it is no less indisputable that it marks a high point in the evolution of American democracy, that it represents a triumph of the rule of law.

For six hours on Saturday President Clinton sat at one end of a long table in the conference room of his attorney's Washington office. He was flanked, on one side, by Ms Jones and her six lawyers, on the other side by a smaller team of lawyers representing him. The session was behind closed doors and a judicial gag-order forbids any of the parties present from disclosing the exchanges that took place. We do know for sure, however, that Ms Jones' lawyers asked the President point-blank whether during his tenure as Governor of Arkansas, on the afternoon of 8 May 1991, he invited their client to a hotel room, lowered his trousers, exposed his erect member and asked her to kiss it. We can also confidently surmise that he was interrogated at length about his legendary sexual indiscretions, and questioned in particular about whether he had ever abused his position as Governor and boss to proposition any other women in the employment of the state of Arkansas.

At the far end of the room, directly opposite the President, a video camera recorded the inquisition – the first time ever that a sitting President of the United States had given sworn testimony as a defendant in a legal proceeding, testimony



Trailer-trash turned Avon lady manqué, face to face with the big banana



Photography: Reuters

that may be used in evidence against him when the case goes to trial on 27 May.

Crazily, even as the President was undergoing this extraordinary ordeal, the world was reverberating to the news from Baghdad that Saddam Hussein was once again rattling the sabre of war. This week Benjamin Netanyahu and Yasser Arafat visit Washington in yet another attempt to defuse the looming catastrophe in the Middle East. Immediately upon his return to the White House on Saturday afternoon the President conferred with his chief of staff about the financial crisis in the Far East and sat down to examine the draft of his State of the Union address, that is just a week away.

Fully cognisant of the possibility that the President might have all this and more on his plate, the Supreme Court ruled last May against a motion by Mr Clinton's lawyers calling for a special exemption. Mr Clinton wanted the Paula Jones trial to be deferred until after the end of his presidential term. The Supreme Court said that no American citizen, no matter how exalted, was above the law.

And thus it came about that on Saturday morning, as Ms Jones prepared to face down the President for the first time since allegedly saying to him seven years ago, "I'm not that kind of girl," she hit upon the heart of the matter when she declared: "I feel so proud to be an American, to know that this judicial system works, to know

that a little girl from Arkansas is equal to the President of the United States."

George Washington might be turning in his grave but, on reflection, he would have to recognise, however grudgingly, the exemplary justness of the principle Ms Jones is upholding. The fact that she did not actually utter those words herself is another matter, one that draws attention to the tawdriness of this particular exercise in defence of freedom and the rights of man and woman. The quote was attributed to her in a press interview by Susan Carpenter-McMillan, a peroxide blonde of indeterminate age from Southern California who has seized on the opportunity to savour her 15 minutes of fame by appointing herself Mrs Jones' publicist, fashion counsellor and Svengali.

Insinuating herself into the baby-voiced Ms Jones' graces by talking to her in the baby language she best understands, Ms Carpenter-McMillan has helped organise Ms Jones' book pitches, her jewellery purchases for media appearances, the boarding arrangements for her little dog Mitzie. With the assistance of Danny DiCrisio, Hollywood hairstylist for Playboy centrefolds, Ms Carpenter-McMillan has overseen Ms Jones' cosmetic transformation from big-haired, neon-painted "trailer-trash" to sleek, Avon lady manqué.

The financing for the Paula Jones circus comes from a wealthy Virginian good ole' boy named John Wayne White-

head whose Rutherford Institute has a history of espousing little local Christian right-wing causes. It was odd that an organisation so pious, devoted to promoting prayer in schools and so forth, should have embraced a case so prurient, so vividly precise in its descriptions of the erect presidential member's purportedly curious shape. Yet when asked by the *New York Times* in an interview yesterday whether there had been any political agenda behind his decision to take up arms on behalf of Ms Jones, Mr Whitehead replied, "Oh, gosh, no!"

It is tempting to speculate that if Ms Jones is prepared to consort with such crass merchants of humbuggery then perhaps she is, as her detractors in the Clinton camp say, a gold-digging floozy whose whole case against the President rests on a devious and infantile lie – like those children who somehow invent amazingly lurid tales of sexual abuse by their foster parents, without quite grasping what the consequences of their accusations will be.

But that will be for the courts to decide. What is true beyond reasonable doubt is that the adventures of Paula Jones offer an unlikely illus-

tration of the chief reason why America is the economic powerhouse of the planet. Where America is way ahead of the Europeans and everyone else is in the scope it provides its citizens to get ahead in life. Paula Jones was born in rural Arkansas 31 years ago into a poor Bible-bashing household where television was prohibited, where miscreant children were disciplined with "a good whupping", where the family's clothes were hand-made by her mother out of scraps of fabric her father brought home from the factory where he worked.

This weekend, Ms Jones flew her hairdresser, Mr DiCrisio, from Los Angeles to Washington for the big day. No one can deny, no matter how distasteful her methods might have been, that she has come a long way.

More important, the failure of the President of the United States to escape the full force of the law, against his deepest wishes and those of his unfortunate wife and daughter, sets an example to the rest of the world, to tyrannies and democracies alike. Once the laughter has subsided, we might all fruitfully pause in wonder for a moment of sober thought.

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What's in the Dome? A solution to the Mandelson problem, maybe



THOMAS SUTCLIFFE
MILLENNIUM POLITICS

We are already aware that the Millennium Dome will be capacious. Every schoolboy knows (provided he can actually read) that you could fit Nelson's Column under the Teflon canopy and surround it with four Albert Halls. But an equally pertinent question would be: "Is it big enough to contain Peter Mandelson's ambitions?" And, from his perspective at least, the answer seems to be a decided "yes". The Minister without Portfolio has taken possession of the scheme. He reportedly refers to it casually as "my Dome" and far from maintaining a cautious distance between himself and

a project which could easily bite the hand that feeds it, he has repeatedly jumped the safety moat. If it all does go wrong it will be virtually impossible for him to claim that he wasn't at the heart of the failure. And this needs explanation, surely. It may be that his admiration for his grandfather (who masterminded the Festival of Britain) has added an emotional allure to this task but there must be more to it than that.

We shouldn't rule out the possibility, first of all, that the possession has worked in the other direction entirely – that Mr Mandelson has succumbed to building fever, a delirium caused by the intoxicating fumes that rise from architectural models. It is an occupational hazard for architects, naturally, most of whom live their lives in a haze of never-to-be-realised magnificence. But architects are insured to the effects by repeated exposure, are far better able to maintain some notion of reality in order to survive the inevitable disappointments.

Outsiders often have weaker heads. When I worked at the BBC, for example, it was widely believed that the career advancement of Dick Francis, then head of radio, had been finally derailed after his seduction by a Norman Foster

design for a new Broadcasting House. This was to occupy the site of the old Langham Hotel and it would have been a wonder – responding to but not overwhelming – All Souls opposite, providing a "diagonal professional gallery" from Cavendish Square through to the flagship of public service broadcasting, Norman Foster came in to address staff about its potential glories, which included glass-walled recording studios to reveal broadcasters to their public and a U-shaped lift, which would carry workers between any floor of the old building and any level of the new. Such a lift had never been built before and seemed to some of us a slightly over-engineered substitute for the zebra crossing which had given years of maintenance-free service, but it was all part of the fantasy of advancement and achievement such endeavours generate, the bliss of tangible progress.

You can see that the Greenwich site is heady stuff in this respect. From toxic dereliction to wonder of the world in just a few short years; if it works it will be the make-over of the decade and it will reflect on its begueter a glow of mastery and control. Those who wonder why an able politician should pour all his energies into the

erection of a glorified big top have to take account of the fact that the big top might be seen by Mr Mandelson to contain the one thing which he conspicuously lacks – public acclaim and even (let us dream a little along with him) public affection. (I don't want to be casually snooty about the Dome, incidentally:



All eyes on you know who Justin Sutcliffe

even in its skeletal state, a crown rack of lamb without the meat, it already inspires awe by its sheer scale. If it is not to a mediocre edifice, I so we may have one speculative answer to the question we began with – in career terms the Dome may represent a zig which will only make obvious sense in the light of the succeeding zag, the route to high office often requiring some crab-like motions.

But it is worth remembering, too, that questions change their meaning depending on who is asking them. Imagine that same initial query put by Tony Blair, for example. It would, I think, sound a good deal more calculated and strategic and it is difficult to believe that Mr Mandelson has not taken that into account. In

The Prince Macbiavelli refers at one point to the admirable utility of the French parliament in insulating the king from public hatred. "From this," he writes, "we may draw an important conclusion: that princes should entrust unpopular measures to others, and reserve popular ones for themselves". On the face of it, though, Tony Blair seems to have done precisely the opposite – he has taken on the task of pushing through welfare reform, a potentially explosive task, while his trusted lieutenant is made Minister for Bread and Circuses. Never mind that the Dome is turning out to be a singularly unpopular project (a contempt reinforced almost daily by co-

medians, for whom its hulk and vacuity make it an unmissable target) that couldn't necessarily have been foreseen at the time when Mr Mandelson was given his job. But when you think about it the Dome took a sizeable stone out of Tony Blair's shoe. The Prime Minister's gifts of incredulity are considerable – as demonstrated by his ingenious shock when anyone questions his good intentions – but even he must have recognised that the nation did not love Bobby as he did, never mind his colleagues in the Labour Party. And once the task of election was over it was difficult to see to what task Mr Mandelson could be applied without generating a persistent screech of internal friction. The job of supervising the Dome, safely beyond the pale of government policy, and ambiguously poised between reward and exile, could hardly be bettered as a solution. Mr Mandelson's friends can present it as a great opportunity, fraught with dangers that only amplify the eventual achievement, while his enemies can relish the diet of scepticism and contempt for the next two years. It may well be staggeringly expensive, then, but in one respect at least, the Dome is already fulfilling its function.

The Right Rev Alastair Haggart

Alastair Iain Macdonald Haggart, priest: born 10 October 1915; ordained deacon 1941, priest 1942; Provost, St Paul's Cathedral, Dundee 1959-71; Principal and Pastoral Professor, Episcopal Theological College, Edinburgh 1971-75; Canon, St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh 1971-75; Bishop of Edinburgh 1975-85; Primus of the Episcopal Church in Scotland 1977-85; married 1945 Margaret Trundle (died 1979; two daughters), 1983 Mary Scholes; died Edinburgh 11 January 1998.

In Scotland a bishop is elected by the clergy and lay representatives of the diocese, a democratic process which can frequently lead to a stalemate when the clergy and the laity back different candidates. When Alastair Haggart was put forward as a candidate for the Edinburgh diocese, there was no such wrangle. He was the first and obvious choice of clergy and laity, and the election process was one of the shortest.

In an age of religious doubt Haggart stood out as someone whose confidence in the faith was unshaken—not because doubts did not exist, but because he had thought them through and had reached firm conclusions.

Slightly magisterial, in preaching, he recognised that the Christian faith could exist at various levels. For some a simple faith as learnt in childhood remained adequate, while for others it required intellectual wrestling and a search for deeper meaning and justification. Haggart would on occasion preach to both elements in the

congregation, making it clear when those already satisfied could switch off. With anyone struggling with the faith he would happily listen and argue, not thrusting forward his own views, but modestly meeting arguments put forward. He inspired not only respect, but a great affection, and his kindness and sense of humour won him many friends.

Although he was not brought up in the Episcopalian Church but in the Free Presbyterian Church, his clerical career was very much along traditional lines. Trained at Edinburgh Theological College with a degree from Durham University, he served his curacy at St Mary's Cathedral in Glasgow, then held a brief charge at St Mary's, Hendon, before returning to Scotland in 1948.

From Perth he went west again to be Rector of St Oswald's, King's Park, Glasgow, and eight years later was instituted Provost of St Paul's Cathedral, Dundee, for 12 years. Then, after a period as Principal of the Theological College in Edinburgh, he was elected Bishop of Edinburgh in 1975. To no one's surprise he was chosen by his fellow bishops as Primus of the Episcopal Church in 1977, the equivalent of an Archbishop in England; as junior bishop he was thus preferred to the office which normally was filled by the most senior.

He had shown how sensitively he could handle the situation in Dundee where his predecessor as provost had become the bishop of the diocese. Changes and reorganisation would, he knew, be carefully watched, but he made his changes tactfully and renewed the life of the cathedral. At the

Theological College at a time when clergy vocations were booming, he inspired the ordinands and modernised their training. His ability was apparent, as his tenure as Primus confirmed, and as did his subsequent appointment to organise many of the arrangements of the Lambeth Conference.

Alastair Haggart was a leader, and one of his first steps as primus was to reorganise the government of the Scottish Church. Finance and doctrine were determined by different bodies, the Representative Church Council and the Provincial Synod. In the council every charge was represented by both its rector and its lay representative; it decided all financial matters, while the Synod debated doctrine and liturgy.

Haggart pushed through the amalgamation of the two bodies into the General Synod, an omni-purpose gathering, reduced in number but increased in power. Traditionalists resisted, but he knew that in the course of every debate there comes a time when impatience, and even boredom, induce tractability and a better decision-making body was created and the expense of convening it reduced.

In his few spare moments his interests were walking, reading and listening to music; to these he added in his *Who's Who* entry—and one can imagine his smile as he did so—"asking questions". That he failed to wait for the answer, or gave it himself, was an accepted characteristic. Happily, to the end his intellectual vigour and this quest for knowledge never failed.

—Ivor Guild



Primus: Haggart stood out as one whose confidence in the faith was unshaken

Professor Henry Barcroft

Henry Barcroft, physiologist: born Cambridge 18 October 1904; Lecturer in Physiology, University College London 1932-35; Dunville Professor of Physiology, Queen's University, Belfast 1935-48; Professor of Physiology, St Thomas's Hospital Medical School 1948-71 (Emeritus); FRS 1953; married 1933 Dr Bridget Ramsey (died 1990; three sons, one daughter); died London 11 January 1998.

Henry Barcroft was a distinguished physiologist who greatly extended knowledge of the nervous and chemical control of the circulation in human limbs. He was also exceptionally effective in stimulating and encouraging junior colleagues, and earned their lasting friendship and affection.

He was born in 1904. His father was Sir Joseph Barcroft, a brilliant and charismatic Cambridge physiologist from an Irish Quaker background. His maternal grandfather, Sir Robert Ball, had been Astronomer Royal of Ireland and Professor of Astronomy at Cambridge. Henry entered King's College, Cambridge, in 1923 with an exhibition, and was awarded a double first in the Tripos examinations, and research studentships that enabled him to study circulatory problems in animals for the next two years.

He spent three years at St Mary's Hospital, London, completing his medical qualification, but decided immediately to become a scientist rather than a clinician. Within the prestigious department of physiology at University College London, he resumed his earlier animal work, but was, crucially, exposed to colleagues in other departments who were extending the application of scientific investigations to human clinical problems. Many of these colleagues subsequently assumed great importance in British medicine.

After three years at UCL Barcroft was, at the age of 30, appointed in 1935 to the Dunville Chair of Physiology at Queen's University, Belfast. It was the specific hope and expectation of the university that his appointment would stimulate research in the Faculty of Medicine. It did so.

In 1935 the staffing, accommodation and equipment at Queen's were meagre. Barcroft did have the help of recent medical graduates on short-term appointment as demonstrators, but no permanent lecturer until O.G. Edholm was appointed in 1938. The teaching duties were formidable. There were 678 students in the Medical Faculty, 43 per cent of all the students in the university. Student practical classes had to be triplicated. All these problems Barcroft overcame by rugged determination, hard work and skilful planning. To free as much time as possible for research all physiology lectures were given at 9am each weekday, including Saturday.

He now turned his full attention to human physiology, using himself, healthy volunteers and willing patients as subjects, and studied the regulation of the blood flow in the limbs. He measured flow by the non-invasive method of what is known as "venous occlusion plethysmography". This method enabled observations to be made several times a minute, which allowed fluctuations in flow to be followed.

Meticulous attention to detail was essential, and measurement of recordings was laborious, but the method served. Others had used it on humans, but Barcroft, Edholm

and associates refined it and used it to determine the roles of the sympathetic nervous fibres in the constriction and dilatation of the blood vessels of skin and muscle, and the actions of adrenaline and noradrenaline and other substances on these vessels. Queen's medical graduates with an interest in research were likely to turn to the department of physiology, to join the work and to submit a thesis for the MD degree.

In 1948, Barcroft was appointed to the chair at the Sherrington School of Physiology at St Thomas's Hospital Medical School in London. Legend has it that he was unable to add a floor to the building because his brother-in-law, Archbishop Michael Ramsey, had a right to view the Palace of Westminster from Lambeth Palace. Barcroft gathered enthusiastic co-workers, and together with H.J.C. Swan wrote the first monograph of the Physiological Society, *Sympathetic Control of Human Blood Vessels*, published in 1953; the shortest in the society's series of over 30 monographs, is couched in simple and direct language, and illustrated by the elegantly clear diagrams that characterise all Barcroft's papers. It has stood the test of time.

In the same year Barcroft was elected to a Fellowship of the Royal Society, and in 1957 he was appointed Chairman of the Editorial Board of the *Monographs of the Physiological Society*. Honorary degrees at home and abroad followed, and he was later appointed as a Wellcome Trustee. Many who worked with him or came under his influence continued in active research, and occupied chairs at the Mayo Clinic and elsewhere in North America, and in Australia, as well as in the United Kingdom.

He married Dr Bridget (Biddy) Ramsey, whom he had met at Cambridge, in 1933, and they had four children, and were a happy and most hospitable family. In retirement he faced increasing arthritic immobility with unrelenting courage and determination. He also had the support of the family, especially after the death of his beloved Biddy in 1990. In recent years, long after golf and sailing became impossible, he enjoyed researching with O.L. Wade the life and work of Admiral Beaufort, who devised the numerical wind force scale.

Barcroft's 80th birthday was



Barcroft: blood circulation in the limbs

celebrated at a dinner of the Physiological Society, and for his 90th 45 friends, some from North America and Europe, gathered to give him a celebratory luncheon at the Royal Society of Medicine. On 7 November 1997 he attended in good cheer and spirit the last meeting the Physiological Society was to hold at St Thomas's Hospital. At this, I.C. Roddie gave a lecture celebrating Barcroft's life's work, attesting to the scientific regard and personal affection in which he was held.

A. D. M. Greenfield

Harry Middleton

Henry Lambert Middleton, television producer and executive: born London 26 August 1923; recorded programmes assistant, BBC 1943-45, radio announcer 1945-49, presentation assistant 1949-54, Assistant Head of Outside Broadcasts (Sound) 1954-59, Assistant Head and Head of Event Programmes, Television Outside Broadcasts 1959-62, Chief Assistant to the General Manager, Television Outside Broadcasts 1962-72, Head of Television Liaison 1972-78; married 1964 Jennifer Berry (née Fearnley-Whittinghall; one daughter and one adopted stepdaughter; marriage dissolved 1976); died Hungerford, Wiltshire 17 January 1998.



Middleton: 'You take over'

Harry Middleton was Peter Dimmock's troubleshooter and aide-de-camp in BBC TV Outside Broadcasts, and later an excellent ambassador for the BBC as Head of Television Liaison. He was a heavy smoker and suffered for many years from lung cancer. Last August, although he was very ill, he managed, by great force of will, to lead his

daughter Laura down the aisle at her wedding near Belsay Castle, his family's Northumberland home since 1260, and to make a moving speech about what Belsay meant to the Middletons.

Middleton's broadcasting speciality was the coverage of horse racing. He was seldom without a racehorse of his own or as part of a syndicate. He was still in his twenties when his horse Porcupine won at Alexandra Park. He did a number of paddock commentaries for television at Ascot and Kempton Park in 1952 and 1953, and he made his first racing commentary for radio in May 1953; the City of Birmingham Cup.

In 1943 Middleton, who had been at Eton and New College, Oxford, was hoping to join the Coldstream Guards. While getting over an illness he took a job at the BBC as a stop-gap. But he was finally rejected by the medical board and settled down

to two years as a recorded programmes assistant.

On one occasion his coolness was severely tested. One of Churchill's great war speeches, recorded on film, was being transmitted to the world. Middleton had to "shadow" the speech on disc recordings in case the film broke down. He kept his recording three words behind Churchill's voice on the film so that, in an emergency, the discs could be substituted for the film track with no audible break in the speech.

It was a rush job and Middleton had not had any time to rehearse the discs. All went well until he suddenly realised the two recordings did not tally. At that moment an engineer burst in. "The film is about to break. You take over." Frantically Middleton dropped the needle here and there on the disc, searching for the right line. Would Churchill be forced off the air? At last Middleton

found it. Thirty seconds later the film broke. No listener noticed.

Middleton was a dark-haired, handsome man. He had a good speaking voice, and was soon tried out as an announcer. In 1947, when he was only 24, he became the BBC's youngest senior announcer. He then worked as John Snagge's deputy in Presentation and in 1951 he was the youngest man ever to read the general election results. Because of his interest in racing he was promoted to become the Assistant Head of Radio Outside Broadcasts under Charles Max Muller, before transferring, in 1959, to the equivalent post in television.

Middleton acted as the general deputy to Peter Dimmock, then in charge of television outside broadcasts. The two became close friends, and Dimmock was one of the last to visit Middleton in the Hungerford nursing home where he died.

—Leonard Miall

Jack Grimm

Jack F. Grimm, oil prospector and adventurer: born Wagoner, Oklahoma 18 May 1925; married (one son, one daughter); died 6 January 1998.

Jack Grimm once described his life "as a continuous search for the unknown". A gambler by instinct and geologist by training, he made his considerable fortune as an oil wildcatter in Texas and Oklahoma and then spent it on quixotic hunts for the

Sasquatch in the Pacific Northwest, the Abominable Snowman in Nepal, the Loch Ness Monster in Scotland, Noah's Ark in Turkey and the *Titanic* in the Atlantic.

A flamboyant man by nature, he maintained that he had indeed found both the wrecked ship and the ark, a piece of which, he insisted, he carried in his briefcase wherever he went.

Grimm's lifelong questing began early; at the age of 11 he was inspired by his grandfather's

tales of treasure to blow up a riverbed near his home-town of Wagoner, Wisconsin, with dynamite from the local hardware store. All he found were a few arrowheads, bullets and an old frying pan but it was enough to confirm his passion. "That was it," he later said. "That was all it took to fire my imagination."

After serving in the Marines in the Second World War, Grimm was inspired by his friend Bunker, the son of the millionaire oil wildcatter F.L.

Hunt, to go into the prospecting business. He studied geology and turned down job offers from oil companies to strike out on his own. He was lucky the first well he drilled in Oklahoma struck oil. But after he moved to Texas the subsequent 25 were dry and Grimm, who spent so much time on the telephone that he once said he planned to have a telephone in his coffin, was broke. But, with one last try, oil flowed again.

In the 1970s, Grimm turned to other searches. He signed on

for three expeditions to Turkey to look for Noah's Ark. By scholarly reckoning he failed, but he nevertheless returned to the United States with a piece of carved oak dug from the mountainside of Mount Ararat that was enough to convince him he had succeeded. "This is the ark; that's my story, and I'm going to stick to it," he declared.

Grimm was inspired to go after other treasures and with his tenacity and capacity for showmanship found rich backers for his various projects. In 1979 he

launched an effort to find the *Titanic*, a search detailed in his book *Beyond Reach: the search for the Titanic* (1982). Though the expedition contributed information that would help the ultimate discovery of the wreck in 1985, a grainy photograph of an anchor taken by Grimm's team was inconclusive. Again, Grimm claimed otherwise.

In later years, the adventurer's exploits were curtailed by a downturn in the oil business and in the Texas economy.

—Edward Helmore

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

DEATHS

CORNISH: Francis John, aged 83 years. Priest for 39 years. Dear husband of Diana and father of Francis, Timothy and Rupert. Thanksgiving service at St Mary's, Clapham, Woking, on Thursday 22 January at 10.45am, followed by interment. Thank offerings instead of flowers for John Cornish Memorial Fund c/o H.D. Tribe Ltd, 259 Goring Road, Goring, Wokingham (01903 249913).

Changing of the Guard
The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, Whitehall, on Monday 19 January. The Band of the Grenadier Guards will be in attendance.

Birthdays

Mr Desi Arnaz Jr, actor, 45; Mr Peter Atkinson MP, 55; Miss Nina Bowden, novelist, 73; Mr John Berrow MP, 34; Mr Dewey Bunnell, rock singer and guitarist, 47; The Earl of Carnarvon, honorary racing manager to the Queen, 74; Sir Jonathan Clarke, former circuit judge, 68; Mr Michael Crawford, actor and singer, 56; Mr Bernard Dunstan, painter, 78; Mr Stefan Edberg, tennis player, 32; Mr Rod Evans, rock singer, 53; Mr Phil Everly, rock singer, 59; Mr Walter Goldsmith, chairman, Flying Flowers, 60; Mr William Hayden, former chairman and chief executive, Jaguar, 69; Mr Hans Hotter, bass baritone, 89; Sir Alex Jarratt, former chairman, Smiths Industries, 74; Mr Richard Lester, film director, 66; Brigadier Helen Meechie, former Director of the WRAC, 60; Mr David Newbigging, chairman, Faupel Trading Group, 64; Mr Nigel Nicolson, author and former MP, 81; Mr Robert

Palmer, rock singer and guitarist, 49; Miss Dolly Parton, country music singer and actress, 52; Senator Javier Perez de Cuellar, former Secretary-General of the UN, 78; Mr Bryan Pringle, actor, 63; Sir Simon Rattitt, orchestral conductor, 43; Mr Charles Smith, managing director, Chevron UK, 68; Sir John Stanley MP, 56; Mr Dennis Taylor, snooker player, 49; Mr Gary Tiley, MBE, 48; The Earl of Westdean and March, former President, National Trust for Scotland, 86.

Anniversaries

Births: James Watt, inventor of the modern condensing steam engine, 1736; Edgar Allan Poe, author and poet, 1809; Sir Henry Bessemer, engineer, 1813; Paul Cézanne, painter, 1839; Augustus Birrell, author and statesman, 1850. **Deaths:** William Congreve, playwright, 1729; Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, journalist and socialist, 1865. **On this day:** King

Edward III established the Order of the Garter, 1348; the Duke of Wellington took Ciudad Rodrigo, 1812; the coast of Antarctica was discovered by Captain Charles Wilkes, 1840; Verdi's opera *Il Trovatore* was performed for the first time, Rome 1853; Massena's opera *Manon* was first performed, Paris 1884; President Theodore Roosevelt sent greetings to King Edward VII from Washington to London by wireless telegraphy 1903; an explosion occurred at Woolwich Arsenal, the East London munitions factory, with 450 casualties, including 69 killed, 1917; the Japanese invaded Burma, 1942; India Gandhi became prime minister of India, 1966. Today is the Feast Day of Saints Abachum and Audifax, St Albert of Cashel, St Canute IV of Denmark, St Charles of Sezze, St Fillan or Feolan, St Germanicus, St Henry of Uppesala, Saints Maritus and Marthia, St Messalina, St Nathalan and St Wulfstan.

CASE SUMMARIES: 19 JANUARY 1998

The following notes of judgments were prepared by the reporters of the All England Law Reports.

Limitation

Uxley Bank plc v Wycoll & Son; CA (Evans LJ, Wilson LJ) 19 Dec 1997.

A defendant who had not served a counterclaim or set-off with his original defence to particulars of claim might amend his defence by adding a set-off and counterclaim after the expiry of the limitation period.

Sebastian Neville-Clarke (DJ. Freeman) for the first defendant; Anthony Mann QC (Hammond Suddards) for the plaintiff.

Courts

Agar v Agar; CA (Simon Brown LJ, Hale LJ) 19 Dec 1997.

Where the Court of Appeal made an order for costs not to be enforced without leave of the court against a legally aided party, the party seeking to enforce the order should apply not to the Court of Appeal but to the court from whose order

the appeal had been brought. *Simon Oliver (Dimitroffs York, Craydon) for the appellants; Matthew Rudd (Dolan & Pritchard, Colham) for the respondent.*

Conversion

MCC Proceeds Inc v Lehman Brothers International (Europe) CA (Hobhouse, Pill, Mummery LJ) 19 Dec 1997.

A person was only entitled to sue in conversion if he had actual possession or the immediate legal right to possession of the goods at the time of the conversion. According-

ly, where a nominee agreement had created a trust of shares for the benefit of the plaintiff company, and the defendant was a bona fide purchaser for value of the legal estate in the shares from the trustee, without notice of any breach of trust or of any claim by the plaintiff, the plaintiff could not maintain an action in conversion against the defendant.

Patrick Neill QC, Murray Rosen QC, Paul Smith (Herbert Smith) for the plaintiff; Charles Aldous QC, Robert Hildyard QC (Freshfields) for the defendant.

Why Ofex and AIM are heading in the right direction

WEEK AHEAD

DEREK PAIN

Shares indices, for whatever reason, have an unfortunate tendency to give the wrong impression. The Stock Exchange admitted as much when it adjusted, some might say rigged, the New Year's Eve Footsie calculation by changing the closing prices of 11 blue chips.

I suspect Theresa Wallis, responsible for running the Alternative Investment Market, would dearly love the opportunity to tinker with the FTSE AIM index, which allegedly plots the direction of the junior market. AIM has come in for rough criticism, much of it unjustified. As a market specialising in small, start-up, entrepreneurial companies it was bound to have a succession of thrills and spills.

But since it was launched in the summer of 1995 only two constituents have gone bust. Mind you, a few have skidded and slipped and may not es-

cape the corporate graveyard much longer. But for a wealth warning market, which has had more than 350 companies and claims a capitalisation of £5.4bn, the array of casualties is surprisingly light.

True, profit warnings have taken the shine off quite a few constituents. Even so, they live to fight another day.

The FTSE AIM index does not help to allay the more critical perception of the market, showing shares hanging along uncomfortably near their lowest level since the first calculation. Yet the AIM contingent shares, on average, have increased in value by 17 per cent since their flotation. So why does the index mirror such a miserable display?

It's down to the way it is calculated. When the bigger and perhaps more successful AIM companies, such as high-flying pubs chain SFI, graduate to the

main market they are immediately stripped from the calculation with no backward adjustments. So, short of many of the stars, the remaining index constituents are left to give an inaccurate illustration of just how the market has behaved.

AIM also suffers from rather thin spreads research. Still, efforts are being made to increase coverage. For example, stockbroker Duxbury has started a monthly bulletin. In its first issue editor Dr Edmondson comments: "The AIM market is by no means perfect; it is still evolving but major progress has been achieved in a relatively short period of time."

He adds: "As with any new financial market, AIM has a few teething problems. Those have mostly been centred around the areas of perceived inadequate adviser due diligence, inaccurate illustrative profit projections; poor stock

liquidity; limited market/company research."

AIM, not surprisingly with its bedrock of small companies, has only moderate appeal for institutional investors, who have found to their cost it is often difficult to extricate themselves from small company investments.

Institutions have, on average, 22 per cent of AIM companies;

perhaps more significantly, they have provided around 60 per cent of the £1.6 to be the new capital raised on the market.

Institutional support is more evident in the bigger companies and the long established groups which switched from the old matched bargains 4.2 market.

Jennings Brothers, the Cockermouth, Cumbria, brewer, is an example. It has four institutions with more than 3 per cent of its capital. Biggest stake, 9.75 per cent, is held by Mercury Asset Management, now part of Merrill Lynch.

All told, 64 former 4.2 companies took AIM. Others went to the more lightly regulated Ofex market, while others decided to exist in what is a share wilderness with the occasional stockbroker, or the company itself, providing a market.

Genus, a cattle breeding and agricultural consultancy group, used to handle deals in its own shares. But with 30,000 shareholders it found the task too daunting and moved on to the fringe Ofex market last month. Dealings started at 110p; the price is now 140p, giving a £3.2m capitalisation.

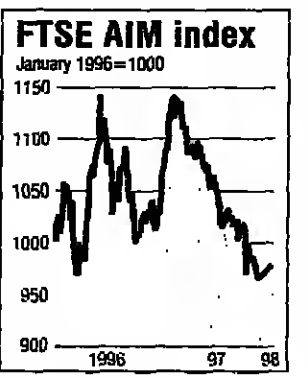
Ofex is run by a Stock Exchange member firm JP Jenkins. It has nearly 200 companies giving a valuation of £2.45bn. However, two of them, National Car Parks and the Green Flag vehicle repair and recovery operation, and Westcote, the family-run breakfast cereals business, are worth nearly £1.1bn.

Ofex has had its casualties. Four have gone bust and question marks hover over a few more. Its disasters include Display IT, once more than 800p, and Woodstock, a pubs group which went belly up only months after raising £600,000. The outlook for

Skyonet, once 275p, is bleak.

Ms Wallis at AIM and John Jenkins, the man behind Ofex, have felt obliged to tighten their rules since the inception of the markets. Both stress that regulation must be a continuing process. But at the end of the day their powers are limited - in the case of companies it is suspension, then expulsion. Advisers are perhaps more vulnerable. AIM companies must have a nominated adviser as well as a stockbroker, although often it is the same firm performing both functions.

There is, I believe, little doubt the markets have become an essential part of the investment scene and perform valuable capital raising functions as well as providing expansion opportunities. By their very nature AIM and Ofex will suffer more disasters but that should not be allowed to overshadow their undoubted success.



Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Index
Alcoholic Beverages				
2491 Alstom	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2492 Alstom	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2493 Alstom	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2494 Alstom	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2495 Alstom	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00

Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Index
Bankers				
2496 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2497 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2498 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2499 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2500 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00

Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Index
Bankers				
2501 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2502 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2503 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2504 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2505 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00

Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Index
Bankers				
2506 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2507 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2508 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2509 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2510 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00

Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Index
Bankers				
2511 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2512 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2513 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2514 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2515 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00

Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Index
Bankers				
2516 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2517 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2518 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2519 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2520 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00

Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Index
Bankers				
2521 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2522 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2523 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2524 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2525 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00

Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Index
Bankers				
2526 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2527 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2528 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2529 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2530 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00

Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Index
Bankers				
2531 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2532 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2533 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2534 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2535 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00

Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Index
Bankers				
2536 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2537 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2538 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2539 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2540 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00

Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Index
Bankers				
2541 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2542 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2543 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2544 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2545 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00

Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Index
Bankers				
2546 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2547 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2548 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2549 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2550 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00

Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Index
Bankers				
2551 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2552 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2553 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2554 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2555 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00

Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Index
Bankers				
2556 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2557 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2558 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2559 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2560 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00

Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Index
Bankers				
2561 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2562 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2563 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2564 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2565 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00

Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Index
Bankers				
2566 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2567 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2568 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2569 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2570 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00

Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Index
Bankers				
2571 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2572 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2573 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2574 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2575 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00

Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Index
Bankers				
2576 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2577 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2578 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2579 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2580 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00

Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Index
Bankers				
2581 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2582 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2583 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2584 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2585 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00

Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Index
Bankers				
2586 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2587 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2588 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2589 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2590 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00

Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Index
Bankers				
2591 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2592 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2593 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2594 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2595 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00

Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Index
Bankers				
2596 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2597 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2598 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2599 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2600 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00

Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Index
Bankers				
2601 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2602 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2603 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2604 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2605 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00

Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Index
Bankers				
2606 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2607 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2608 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2609 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2610 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00

Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Index
Bankers				
2611 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2612 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2613 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2614 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2615 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00

Stock	Price	Chg	Yld	Index
Bankers				
2616 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2617 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2618 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2619 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00
2620 Bankers	107.00	+0.00	4.1	107.00

Stock	Price	Chg	Yld
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Asian flu threatens high street banks as debts are revealed

British high street banks' exposure to the troubled South-east Asian region runs into billions of pounds, according to a leading investment bank. As Leo Paterson reports, the Asian crisis could spell an end to the current bull run in European bank stocks.

Barclays Bank and NatWest Bank each have an estimated £1.2bn exposure to Korea, Indonesia and Thailand, while Lloyds Bank has an £800m exposure, according to an analyst's note published last week.

Stock markets have concentrated so far on the impact of the crisis on American banks and those with strong Far Eastern links, like HSBC Holdings and Standard Chartered. But Britain's high street banks are also embroiled in the region, according to John Leonard, banking analyst at Salomon Smith Barney, the US investment bank.

In recent months UK-based bank stocks have soared on the back of restructuring and consolidation within the industry. But, as stock market awareness

of banks' exposure to the region increases, investors should be prepared for "Asian flu" to spread throughout the European banking sector, according to Mr Leonard.

The analyst said: "Exposure to Asia is quite broadly spread across the industry. But the degree of reaction in the market is at variance with the degree of the exposure".

Salomon Smith Barney estimate the total exposure of leading British banks to Korea and Indonesia to total \$9.9bn (£6bn). Mr Leonard believes banking exposure to Thailand to be roughly similar to that of Indonesia, taking British banking exposure in the three countries to almost \$14bn.

To date, most European banks have failed to provide details of their exposure to troubled South-east Asia.

"Estimating the potential provision exposure of individual banks remains an art, given limited disclosure of both the total amount and the composition of outstanding credits," said Salomon Smith Barney.

The magnitude of the exposure to Korea and Indonesia alone could lead the British banks to post 1997 provisions of up to £100m, according to the Salomon Smith Barney note.

All the large British banks are scheduled to report 1997 profits within the coming weeks.

Bad loans are just one of a number of implications of the Far Eastern crisis for the financial health of the European banks. Banks should also be braced for a sharp downturn in profitability in their Far Eastern investment and wholesale banking activities.

Salomon Smith Barney said: "There is little question that securities market volumes and fees from this region will decline sharply in 1998; managing assets down as rapidly seems impossible."

A handful of leading banks - mostly in the US - have admitted the Asian crisis has hit investment banking profits. These include Chase Manhattan, which made a trading loss of \$160m (£94m) in October because of volatility in the emerging markets.

A wave of consolidation helped European bank shares to outperform the market for much of 1997 and to number among brokers' top tips for 1998.

But prospects for the banking sector began to sour last week as Moody's, the influential US credit ratings agency, announced it could downgrade a number of European banks because of their exposure to South-east Asia.

With the exception of HSBC and Standard Chartered, which both have strong links to the troubled region, British bank shares have so far emerged relatively unscathed.

Provisions for the Asian crisis should be able to be contained easily within the current earnings of European banks. Barclays made a profit of over £2bn in 1996. NatWest earned more than £1bn in profit.



Children queue for food handouts in Indonesia, where price rises sparked riots yesterday. Photograph: Dylan Martinez/Reuters

Optimism increases for Far Eastern markets

Analysts were yesterday cautiously optimistic about the embattled south-east Asian stock markets, as last week's Far Eastern rally renewed hopes that the worst could be over.

But it was not all good news in the region. Indonesia continued to reel from weekend riots prompted by the economic turmoil. And, in Japan, the corporate racketeering scandal re-erupted with arrests at Nomura Securities, Japan's largest brokerage.

Analysts predicted the Tokyo stock market would today pick up the pace set on Friday, when the Nikkei surged 6 per cent to close just above 16,000, and were also optimistic about prospects for the rest of the region.

"The Nikkei average will move well

above the 16,000 level but it will not go straight to 17,000," said Tetsuya Ishijima, strategist at Okasan Securities.

Kim Dae-jung, the president-elect in South Korea, was yesterday among the optimists in south-east Asia. He received a standing ovation as he vowed to lead Korea out of the financial crisis.

The president-elect said: "Trust me. I am ready to take on the problem. At first I was overwrought but now I feel I can do it." Last month he voiced serious concerns about his country's prospects only days after being elected.

But analysts were yesterday careful to inject a note of caution into their forecasts. "The [Malaysian ringgit] currency has yet to show signs of really stabilising," said

Ken Loo, head of research at Amsteel Securities in Kuala Lumpur.

This cautious note was echoed in Singapore, where Lee Hsien Loong, the deputy prime minister, warned yesterday that the forthcoming Singaporean budget would be tight.

Meanwhile in Japan, the corporate racketeering scandal re-emerged, with the arrests yesterday of two former executives of Nomura Securities and a government financial official. The three are charged with bribery.

Japanese press reported at the weekend that Nomura, which has only just re-commenced trading after a five-month ban for its involvement in the racketeering scandal, would today post its first ever quarterly loss.

— Leo Paterson

Harrison tipped for role at DMG

Bill Harrison, who recently resigned as the chief executive of BZW, is set to head up Deutsche Bank in London as the German institution merges its own commercial banking operations with those of its investment banking arm, Deutsche Morgan Grenfell.

The new strategy could be announced as soon as this week. While Mr Harrison's appointment has yet to be confirmed, the template for Deutsche Bank's reorganisation is largely agreed; the Morgan Grenfell name will be scrapped, and the investment banking side will be combined with commercial banking, centred in London, to form a wholesale banking operation on the same lines as JP Morgan.

Mr Harrison is likely to be paid less at Deutsche than at BZW, where he got £2.85m in his last full year. Mr Harrison, nicknamed "Antilla the Brum", is also unlikely to get much of a payout from BZW, according to observers, since he resigned.

Michael Dobson, the current chief executive of Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, will remain a member of the 10-strong Vorstand, the council which runs Deutsche Bank globally. While his new role has not yet been confirmed, Mr Dobson is likely to help merge Morgan Grenfell Asset Management (MGAM), the business which fell victim to the Peter Young affair and the departure of Nicola Horlick, with Deutsche's own retail asset management arm.

Mr Dobson was given the mandate by Deutsche to build a world-wide investment bank centred on Morgan Grenfell in London, and may still continue with a group-wide role.

— John Willcock

Seagram in talks with Allied over spirits merger

Allied Domecq is holding merger talks with Seagram, the Canadian leisure giant, along with some of the world's largest spirits companies. Andrew Yates reports on the group's attempts to form a powerful drinks cocktail and take on the might of the newly merged Guinness and Grand Metropolitan Group.

City observers believe that Allied is most likely to strike a deal with Seagram to create the biggest spirits business in the world with sales of more than £4bn a year. Goldman Sachs, the US investment bank who has been appointed to advise on Allied's options, has placed Seagram at the top of the list of potential partners. However, the group is understood to be holding talks with other big names in the industry including Bacardi-Martini, Pernod-Ricard, Brown-Forman and American Brands to create a world beating drinks Goliath. All these groups have brands that Allied would dearly love to get hold of.

One analyst said: "At this stage you can't exclude any of the big players in the market, although Seagram is an early front-runner. It has the best match of brands with Allied."

Allied has come under pressure to do a deal after Guinness and Grand Met announced its intention to merge last May, to form Diageo.

Goldman Sachs is understood to be pushing Allied to seal a partnership as soon as possible. However, a deal is unlikely to be concluded in the immediate future. Sources suggest Allied is determined not to rush things and has no set timetable for the conclusion of talks. The City would like to see Allied sort out a deal within the next six months as Diageo begins to exert its huge market power.

Allied is the second-biggest spirits group in the world ahead of Seagram, which is number three in the market. A spirits merger would bring together a vast array of brands, including Teachers and Ballantine's whisky, Courvoisier cognac and Beefeater gin from Allied and Seagram's Chivas Regal whisky, Martell cognac and Mumm champagne. At the moment the two groups are planning a complete merger of their spirits businesses, although they could consider just combining distribution networks.

However Seagram and Allied have ruled out a full merger. Seagram's entertainment business which includes Universal Studios in Hollywood sits uneasily with Allied's pub and retail interests which range from the Finkin chain to Dunkin' Donuts. Allied has annual spirit sales of £2.5bn compared with Seagram's £1.6bn, which means Allied would probably take a majority stake in the combined business that could eventually be demerged and floated on the Stock Exchange.

If Allied manages to form a partnership, it is likely to spark another wave of consolidation in the drinks industry.

House of Fraser plans £300m expansion

House of Fraser is planning to open another 30 department stores as part of an ambitious £300m expansion plan, in a move designed to seal the recovery of the up-market department store operator after years in the doldrums.

The group has recently contacted property agents around the country to find a host of new sites for its opening programme. It already plans to open three stores over the next few years, including sites in Reading, Solihull and a large store at Bluewater Park, a huge new shopping centre complex soon to open near the proposed Channel Tunnel link. It has also identified another 27 towns and cities where it would like a presence.

These include Oxford, Cambridge, York and Chester, where HoF believes the relatively affluent residents will support a new department store. The group is also keen to build its market in the South-east, particularly in East Anglia and Essex. HoF is even contemplating a come back in several towns where it was forced to leave due to poor trading, such as Newcastle.

Analysts estimate that each new store could cost around £10m to build, meaning that the HoF is likely to spend at least £300m on new stores. Its total expenditure will be much higher than this as it has also embarked on a wide-ranging refurbishment programme designed to turn around ailing stores.

The new stores will be called House of Fraser rather than its other trading names, such as Army & Navy, DH Evans and Barkers, which are deemed less likely to succeed.

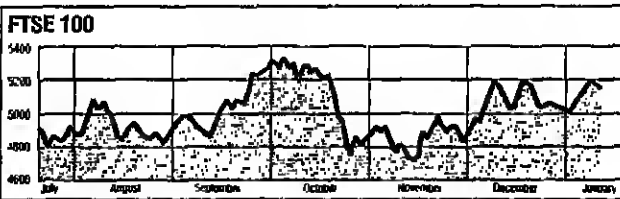
John Coleman, chief executive of HoF said: "I am very positive about the group's future and this is an exciting programme. We have found the stores we want to keep from our existing portfolio and now are in expansion mode."

In its heyday HoF had more than 100 stores but it has now scaled back to half that number.

However, investors' fears resurfaced last week due to disappointing sales last autumn and in the run up to Christmas, which saw the shares fall more than 14 per cent in two days.

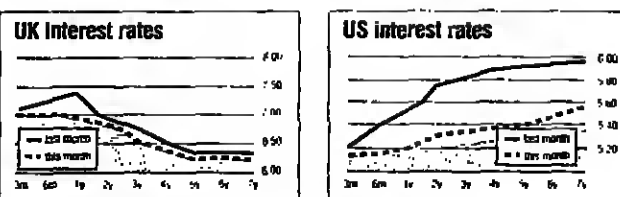
— Andrew Yates

STOCK MARKETS



Index	Close	W's chg	W's chg%	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield%
FTSE 100	5283.10	124.80	2.43	5267.3	4153.2	3.4
FTSE 250	4812.60	-52.00	-1.07	4953.8	4384.2	3.77
FTSE 350	2521.90	43.70	1.76	2570.5	2063.7	3.27
FTSE All Share	2481.58	40.43	1.67	2507.68	2056.17	3.35
FTSE SmallCap	2556.00	7.10	0.28	2407.4	2182.1	3.94
FTSE Floating	1261.00	7.10	0.56	1346.5	1225.2	3.91
FTSE AIM	977.90	-11.50	-1.16	1138	965.9	1.82
Dow Jones	7753.55	173.13	2.28	8299.02	6356.78	1.77
Nikkei	16046.45	1051.35	7.01	20910.79	14488.21	0.95
Hang Seng	8800.04	5.40	0.06	16820.31	7909.13	4.76
Dax	4184.46	-52.48	-1.24	4459.89	2970.45	1.76

INTEREST RATES

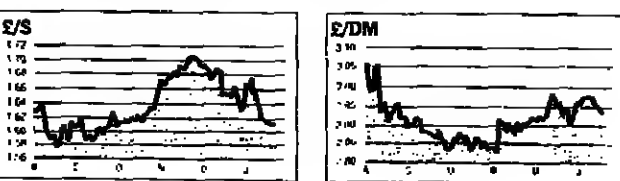


Money Market Rates	3 month	1 yr	1 yr chg	1 yr chg%	10 yr	10 yr chg	10 yr chg%	Long bond	1 yr chg
UK	7.61	1.24	7.63	0.81	6.07	-1.34	6.04	-1.56	
US	5.63	0.06	5.56	-0.28	5.53	-1.02	5.81	-1.02	
Japan	0.72	0.23	0.68	0.13	1.91	-0.69	2.54	-0.70	
Germany	3.56	0.43	3.83	0.62	5.06	-0.66	5.68	-0.91	

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Price (p)	W's chg	% chg	Falls	Price (p)	W's chg	% chg
Tollward Com	80	unch	12.88	Argos	442	-63	-20.22
Vodafone Grn	483	34	12.59	BIC	144	-13.5	-14.78
Danka Bus Syst	289	8	11.58	McKays	395	-43.5	-14.78
Centrica	106.5	3.5	11.52	Osiris	498	-	-14.14

CURRENCIES



Pound	Friday	W's chg	% chg	Dollar	Friday	W's chg	% chg
Dollar	1.6340	+2.12c	1.31%	Sterling	0.6120	-0.0009	-0.15%
D-Mark	2.9848	+5.62c	2.67%	D-Mark	1.8334	+1.14p	1.59%
Yen	211.20	-11.83	-5.60%	Yen	129.26	-2.83	-2.20%
£ index	105.10	+1.50	1.43%	\$ index	109.80	-0.30	-0.27%

OTHER INDICATORS

	Close	Wk's chg	Yr Ago	Index	Chg	Yr ago	Next Day	
Brent Oil (\$)	14.71	-0.14	23.34	GDP	113.90	3.70	109.84	Feb
Gold (\$)	...	11.50	354.55	RPI	160.00	3.60	154.44	Feb
Silver (\$)	5.89	0.15	4.88	Base Rates	7.25	8.00		

www.bloomberg.com source: Bloomberg

Large investors pressure Granada on board pay

Institutional investors in Granada are increasing the pressure on the company over the extra payments made to directors last year. With the company refusing to budge, the scene is set for a showdown at Granada's annual meeting in two weeks time. Nigel Cope, City Correspondent, analyses a corporate governance mis-judgement.

Several of Granada's largest institutional investors are saying that if the company does not change its stance on the £374,000 payments, it will risk permanent damage to its reputation. They say the executive directors should defer the row by paying back the money they received last year in return for having their notice periods in the event of takeover reduced from three years to two.

Several large investors have contacted the media and hotels group to express their dissatisfaction with the payments. But the company is sticking by the decision of its remuneration committee that the payments are justified for the "loss of a benefit".

One senior fund manager said that the row had come at an awkward time for Granada's chairman, Gerry Robinson, who has become more of a public figure after his elevation to chairman of the Arts Council last week. "This

does not get this new chapter in his career off to a good start," he said.

The fund manager added that while the sums were small in relation to the size of the company, they were still an important matter: "If the directors do not pay these sums back I think it will be remembered. Sometimes small mis-judgements add up to larger ones. And make no mistake about it this is a mis-judgement."

Institutions have not been impressed by the company's aggressive handling of the issue. Granada initially said it had received no complaints about it whereas institutions said they had registered complaints. The company has claimed that it "prides itself" on its investor relations. However, it failed to foresee the scale of the row the payments would cause.

The payments meant that Mr Robinson received £138,334, Charles Allen, the chief executive, received £110,000, while three other directors were paid between £32,000-£52,000.

John Ashworth, the chairman of the British Library, who is a non-executive director of Granada and a member of its remuneration committee, is up for re-election at the group's annual meeting on 4 February. It is possible but unlikely that he will be voted down. Ian Martin, a former senior director of Grand Metropolitan, is the chairman of the committee and may be called on to justify the payments.

But institutions say the company would be making a mistake if it let the dispute drag on that far without seeking to limit the damage in some way.

Prices forecast to rise as sales slow

There were more mixed signals on the British economy today as one survey showed a significant rise in the number of firms which expect to raise prices in 1998, while a second survey pointed to the slowest growth in sales for five years.

Dun & Bradstreet published a survey showing that more than six out of 10 business managers questioned said they expected to increase prices this quarter compared with 57.7 per cent in the last quarter of 1997. This could "strengthen demands for an increase in interest rates," according to the business information company.

In Scotland and the West Midlands the proportion of firms expecting to increase prices has grown by 10 per cent but in Wales and the East Midlands there are no signs of inflationary pressures, according to Dun & Bradstreet.

The Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) predicts, however, that there will be a slowdown in sales growth which will make

companies cautious, leading to price increases of 0.7 per cent, the lowest level predicted by the CIM Marketing Trends Survey since 1994.

The Chartered Institute of Marketing adds: "Inflation for all goods and services across the economy will fall below 1.7 per cent - an indication that interest rates are less likely to rise this year."

The CIM forecasts a gradual slowdown for the economy as opposed to a crash. Its marketing trends survey forecasts sales growth will reach 5.1 per cent this year, 0.6 per cent down on 1997. This drop reflects the general expectation of a less buoyant economy in 1998, with reduced inflation, high interest rates and a strong pound, according to the CIM.

The service sector continues to roar on, however. CIM predicts sales growth of 8.8 per cent for financial services and 9.0 per cent for business and property services.

— John Willcock

Harrison
tipped
for role
at DMG



GAVYN DAVIES
ON THE
IMF'S ROLE
IN THE
ASIAN
CRISIS

The case for international rescue packages

A few years ago, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had become a rather obscure institution, focusing mainly on bail-out programmes for impoverished African countries, and wondering whether it would ever again find a use for the massive funds at its disposal. The opening of global capital markets meant that private sector banks and securities firms were increasingly providing the balance of payments financing which had previously been the preserve of the IMF. And the "vigilantes" of the international bond markets were even usurping the IMF's traditional role as the chief policy disciplinarian in the global economy.

Then along came the Mexican crisis in December 1994, described rather ominously at the time by the IMF's managing director, Michel Camdessus, as "the first financial crisis of the 21st century". Three years later, with "21st Century" crises prematurely savaging Thailand, Korea and Indonesia, the IMF has suddenly become the most important economic institution on the world stage.

Fame never comes without a price. In this case, the price has been an eruption of strident criticism from politicians and academics about the way the IMF conducts its business. It has been denounced as an undemocratic institution, obsessed with secrecy. And it is variously accused of inappropriately bailing out private sector banks, of imposing needless recessions on Asian economies, and of giving a helping hand to precisely those industrial competitors which most threaten jobs in the West.

Naturally, not all of these criticisms can be valid at the same time. The easiest to dispose of is the last, which emanates pri-

marily from the protectionist wing of the Democratic Party in the US. It is certainly wrong to suggest that the IMF rescue packages in Asia will cause higher unemployment in Europe or America. In the absence of these programmes, Asia would have fallen into an even deeper recession, and its currencies would have become even more undervalued against both the dollar and European exchange rates. For all these reasons, the immediate threat to Western jobs would have been much more severe in the absence of IMF packages.

Furthermore, in the longer-term, it is quite wrong to suggest that a healthy and thriving Asian economy need imply that Europe and America will suffer accordingly. In fact, the opposite will be true - in an open trading system, all sides will make gains in their potential GDP from rapid expansion in trade flows. The idea that Asian success must equate with failure in the West is just crass.

What about the question of bailing-out Western and Asian banks? It is clear that by providing necessary liquidity in foreign exchange markets, the IMF has reduced bankruptcy risks within Asia, thereby protecting the shareholders of many Western banks. US Republicans are up in arms about this, arguing not only that public money has been used to protect these banks from the consequences of their own foolishness, but also that this will increase their propensity to burn money in the future. Robert Rubin's 1995 Mexican rescue package, which looked so successful at the time, is now castigated for

encouraging Western banks to take reckless risks in Asia two years later.

This problem, known to economists as "moral hazard", is a real one. However, many of the Asian banks and corporations whose bankruptcy has been prevented by the IMF were viable institutions facing severe liquidity crises, not solvency crises. It was certainly appropriate to rescue such institutions.

Furthermore, when Western governments looked "over the brink" at the possibility of sovereign defaults in Asia, they very rapidly concluded that the risks to the world's financial system, especially the payment system, were too great to contemplate. No one should be in any doubt that the decision to disperse more IMF money to Asian governments in recent weeks has been taken not out of any sense of global altruism, but out of a strong sense of self-interest by Western governments.

It is therefore difficult to sympathise with people who have argued that the IMF should have "kept its nose out of Asia". In fact, a more important concern is that the IMF may be forced to stay away from

similar situations in future, simply because it does not have the resources to discharge its role. In the wake of recent Asian packages, Goldman Sachs reckons that the IMF now has only \$45bn of resources available for use on new situations.

Since no prudent institution can go right to the wire and use up all of its money, the margin available to handle new crises is becoming worryingly slim. In the next couple of weeks, both Robert Rubin and President Clinton will argue strongly that Congress should approve new financing tranches for the IMF, but there is a significant risk that these pleas will fall on deaf ears. This would be a worrying mistake.

Finally, what about the recent criticisms (notably from Jeffrey Sachs of Harvard University) about the nature of the IMF conditions imposed on Asian governments?

Essentially, the main thrust of Sachs' argument is that the tightening in fiscal and monetary policy required by the IMF packages was entirely inappropriate for the Asian economies. The genesis of the Asian currency crises had nothing to do with excessive budget deficits or profligate growth in the monetary aggregates, but stemmed instead from massive private sector capital inflows leading to a bubble in domestic asset prices. The real problem, according to Sachs, was a collapse in market confidence - a problem which could be made worse by a tightening in macro-economic policy. Higher interest rates, for example, will make asset price deflation worse.

Given that most Asian governments have achieved

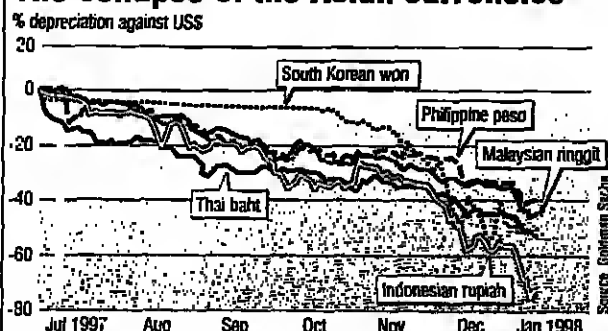
continuous budget surpluses over the 1990s, Sachs clearly has a point. The IMF programmes have variously required fiscal tightening of around 1.5 to 3 per cent of GDP, figures that will be extremely difficult to achieve given the collapse in the economic growth which is now under way. Asia 1998 is not Latin America 1982, and in this new situation it might have been better for the IMF programmes to have required little or no fiscal tightening.

In fact, there is a clear need to use the healthy state of public sector balance sheets to absorb some of the debt of Asian financial systems, thus allowing banking sectors to support a resumption of growth at the earliest possible date. Contrary to the requirements of IMF Lenders of Last Resort, this means that budget deficits may need to rise for a while.

However, as Stanley Fischer of the IMF has argued, there is clearly also an off-setting issue of policy credibility which cannot be ignored. If monetary policy is not held reasonably tight in the aftermath of massive exchange rate shocks, there is obviously a risk that the collapse in currencies could become self-feeding. Not only might this cause hyper-inflation, but it would further increase bankruptcy risks in the financial sector, by inflating the domestic currency value of foreign debt. This would make recessions worse, not better.

There is necessarily a balance to be struck here. Sachs is probably right to argue that budget balances should be higher than the IMF is permitting. But Fischer is right that higher interest rates may be needed to prevent further currency collapses. Expansionary budgetary policy, combined with contractionary monetary policy, may be the best way out of this mess.

The collapse of the Asian currencies



IN BRIEF

Diageo plans shake-up for its London offices

Diageo, the food and drinks giant formed by the recent merger of Guinness and Grand Met, is undertaking a large shake-up of its property portfolio in London. The company says it will sell its offices in Portman Square, in the heart of London, as well as the lease on offices in Hammersmith, west London. Instead, it has bought the lease on a development in Wimpole Street in the capital's West End.

"We hope to complete the various transactions this coming week. We have agreed terms with the owners of the lease - Morgan Stanley - and hope to be formalising this week," a company spokesman said yesterday. Analysts expect the company to net around £20m from the deals. The new office will become the headquarters of UDV, the group's spirits division. As for the old offices, the spokesman added: "We can't sell until we move the staff out, some time in the summer. The building is not yet for sale so it can't have a price tag on it."

UK targeted for takeovers

The UK is close to overtaking the US as the world's favourite takeover target for international companies, according to a survey by KPMG Corporate Finance. The surge is due to overseas companies positioning themselves for European monetary union, according to KPMG. Acquisitions of UK businesses by foreign companies reached a record last year of \$53bn (£32bn). This is up over a third from the \$39bn recorded in 1996 and \$36bn last year. By contrast, takeovers by foreign companies in the US fell to just under \$60bn in 1997, down by nearly a fifth on 1996. This represents the first fall in foreign investment into the US since 1992, according to KPMG.

Bargain hunters pick Asia

1997 was a record year for mergers and acquisitions activity in emerging markets, according to research by Flemings, with total deals worth \$74bn. Over \$18bn of this came from multinationals buying into Asia, a region which attracted many bargain hunters as its financial crisis worsened towards the end of 1997. Globally there was more M&A activity in 1997 than in the previous two years combined, and the value of deals nearly doubled in the second half of 1997 compared with the first half.

Drive-Thru ATMs on trial

Britain's first "Drive-Thru" cash dispenser will be installed by Barclays Bank at Hutton Cross for a six-month trial starting at Easter. It will allow customers to draw cash, check their account balance and request statements, without leaving their cars. Barclays says that Drive Thru machines offer increased safety and convenience, especially for parents with young children and in bad weather. They are common in North America but Hutton Cross will be the first in Britain. Customers of Barclays, Lloyds TSB, Bank of Scotland and Royal Bank of Scotland will be able to use the machine free of charge. Other cardholders will pay a small charge.

Sales up at New Look

New Look, the women's wear retailer, reported strong haul spread-out Christmas trading yesterday. Total sales for the seven-week period ending 10 January 1998 were up 21 per cent on the previous year, and increased by 10 per cent on a like-for-like basis. Tony Collyer, New Look's finance director, said: "Trading went well in early December, then a lot of people waited for the sales after Christmas, where they got a lot of good bargains. It's a very competitive market at the moment, with a slight trend towards more luxury garments."

New director for Waterfall

Peter Hilliar, an ex-BZW and NatWest leisure analyst, has joined snooker-hall company Waterfall Holdings as a non-executive director. Mr Hilliar, 57, joins the AIM-quoted company from Hudson Sandler, the City PR firm.

IT suppliers set to profit from Grid for Learning plans

Information technology suppliers look to be in for a bumper year selling computers and software to schools, as extra funding from the Government fuels a headlong rush to introduce computers into the classroom. The bonanza will kick off next month, when the Govern-

ment announces which schools will share £100m to buy equipment to connect to the National Grid for Learning, the internet-based network which is supposed to link together all the schools in the country by 2002. According to RM, the educational software and hardware

supplier, schools spend just £150m a year on IT equipment. Even if some of the £100m displaces existing spending, the market will grow dramatically.

At the moment 6,000 of the country's 32,000 schools are connected to the internet. However, most use dial-up access

from a dedicated computer, which makes it hard to integrate with classroom teaching. The next step is to connect a school's network to the internet, allowing access from any computer.

The switch will be spurred on by new deals from telecoms suppliers. Both British Telecom

and the cable companies are offering high-speed ISDN links to schools for under £1,000 a year.

The lack of computer literacy among teachers has also prompted Education Secretary David Blunkett to unveil a £235m package, to be drawn from National Lottery funds, to

provide IT training for them. Capita, the outsourcing group, and schools operator, Nord Anglia, are keen to supply the training. But they will have to wait for legislation clearing Government to allocate lottery funds.

- Peter Thal Larsen

Small firms get task force against skill shortages

A task force of leaders has been set up by the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) to deal with the widespread skills shortages that are said to be hindering small firms' competitiveness.

The move comes as the organisation, which claims to represent 110,000 businesses of all types and sizes, published research indicating the problem is as serious as ever.

The survey conducted with Alex Lawrie, a finance company that is part of the Lloyds TSB group, found that nearly a third of firms believe they are being held back by "inadequate levels of skills in both sales and management staff". Computing and other information technology skills shortages remain particularly acute, with firms claiming particular problems with managerial and clerical staff.

In addition to being worried about the effect of such shortages on rising wages, business owners echo other industrialists in expressing concern about the ability of the education system to meet their needs. More than 60 per cent of the 343 firms surveyed believe that school leavers lack basic writing skills, while 38 per cent feel the same about graduates. More than half were also critical of graduates' understanding of the business world.

The survey also found that, while take-up of such formal initiatives as National Vocational Qualifications and Investors in People is generally low, most small firms provide training - largely through on-the-job and specific short courses.

The BCC action comes as Barclays Bank makes another attempt to persuade small business owners of the benefits of obtaining professional advice with two new guides, *Getting the Best from your Business Adviser* and *Developing Relationships with Businesses*.

Both are aimed at improving understanding between business managers and their advisers of their respective needs and priorities.

- Roger Tropp

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Charities race to lure sponsored marathon runners



Steve Cram:
Hosting the
Macmillan Cancer
Relief pasta party
following the
London Marathon
(right)



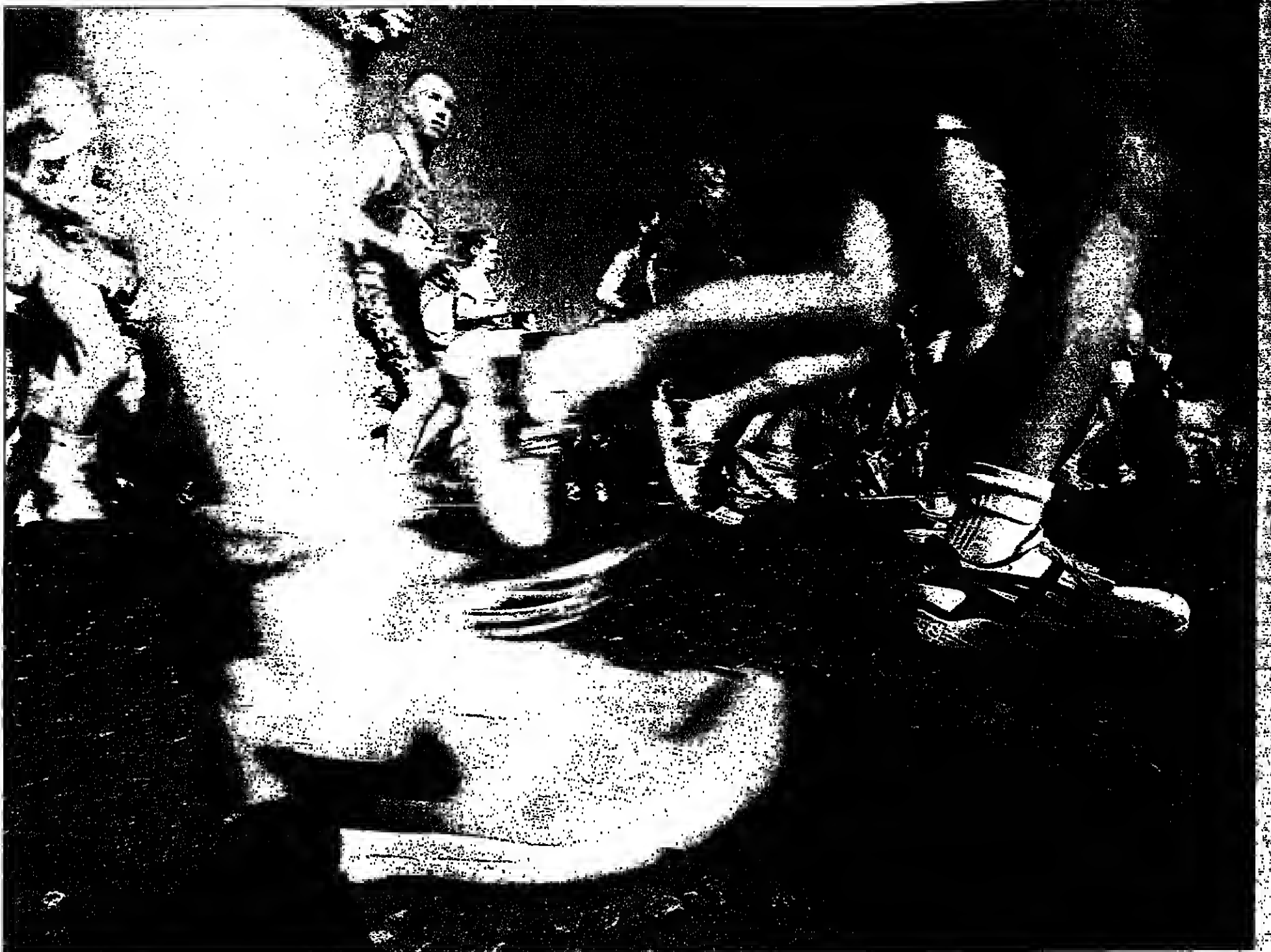
Daley Thompson:
Backing Barnados



Liz McColgan:
Supporting the
Starlight children's
charity



Seb Coe:
Promoting the
Royal National
Institute for the
Blind



For many charities the Flora London Marathon is now the biggest fundraising event of the year. Ian Burrell reveals that this year charities are offering exotic holidays, trips on Concorde and free gifts as inducements to runners to wear their vests.

With the average runner raising £300 in sponsorship money, and some making upwards of £10,000, charities are prepared to go to great lengths to woo those taking part in the race. In literature circulated to the 30,000 competitors, the Get Kids Going charity for disabled children boasts: "Try Beating This For An Incentive" as it offers all its runners a guaranteed free champagne flight on Concorde, with the top fundraiser winning a free holiday in Barbados.

Age Concern tempts runners

with the chance to fly anywhere in the United States, while the British Heart Foundation guarantees its top fundraisers a place in the New York City marathon.

Other charities directly link prizes to the amount raised by the runner. Muscular Dystrophy will give a free mountain bike or sports camera to those raising more than £1,000, with free running shoes for competitors generating £500 or more. The Royal National Institute for the Deaf offers a free CD player for those who raise £1,000 and a trip to Paris on Eurostar for the top fundraiser.

But some of the poorer charities are being left behind. Shelter, the charity for the homeless, tells competitors: "No holidays to South America, no free weekend at a health spa, no colour TV... but what we can offer is hope."

Fiona Head, the charity's fundraising officer, said: "It has become very competitive because we are all trying to get a slice of the cake. We can't afford to offer major prizes and it's going to be very difficult for

some of the smaller charities to keep up." Headway, the charity for people with head injuries, admitted: "It's hard for us to compete because we just haven't got the resources."

The competition has been made even more intense this year by the presence of the Diana, Princess of Wales, Memorial Fund, which is hoping to field a team of 1,000 runners. The Diana fund and Age Concern are the official charities for the 1998 marathon.

Some charities are using celebrity supporters to persuade marathon runners to join their cause.

Steve Cram is hosting the Macmillan Cancer Relief pasta party, while Daley Thompson is backing Barnados, and Sebastian Coe is supporting the Royal National Institute for the Blind. Former marathon winner Liz McColgan backs the Starlight children's charity.

Meanwhile Scope, which gives its runners the chance of winning a year's free membership of a health spa, also offers them a pair of running shoes

signed by the star athlete Denise Lewis.

Stephen Lee, director of the Institute for Charity Fundraising Managers, said charities must be careful to remain within the law. "If a charity is paying for inducements it may be engaging in trading activities rather than fundraising activities, which is against the law for a charity," he said.

Mr Lee pointed out that the fierce competition was indicative of how important the marathon had become to charities.

"Last year the marathon raised some £11m for charity. It is a very significant event and it is up there with Children in Need and Comic Relief in its importance to this sector," he said.

Nick Bitel, chief executive of the London Marathon, said: "This year we confidently expect to raise more than £14m which is more than any other one-day event."

"The prizes that are offered help to incentivise fundraising but I don't think they make people switch from one charity to

another. The best fundraisers per head are usually running for some of the smallest charities."

Some 80 per cent of British runners in the marathon will be raising money for charity. In most foreign marathons, the charity fundraisers number only a handful.

"The charity work and the

fancy dress is a very British thing," said Mr Bitel. "It makes the London Marathon this strange mix of wonderful sporting event and great community occasion at the same time."

The marathon organisers have given all runners special advice on how to maximise the

effectiveness of their fundraising. Competitors are advised to write up a press release about themselves and send it to media outlets.

Those working in business are told to "focus on board rooms and managers with access to budgets".

Charities pay £235 to the

marathon organisers for each place they are given under the Golden Bond scheme, which reserves around 3,000 places for them.

The charities usually ask runners who contact them for a place to guarantee a sponsorship donation of, typically, £1,000.

THE INDEPENDENT
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£10 Conran lunch

The Independent and Independent on Sunday in association with Terence Conran are delighted to offer readers the opportunity to enjoy lunch or early evening supper at six of London's top restaurants throughout January and February for £10

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To participate in the offer simply collect one token (tokens will be printed every day until Saturday February 28th) and then telephone the restaurant of your choice quoting yourself as an Independent diner. On your arrival at the restaurant you should present your token in order to qualify for the offer. Each token is valid for a complete table booking. The tokens will be valid for one week only, and will be dated accordingly. To continue to participate in the offer, simply collect a token from the week in which you wish to dine. Pre-booking is essential and all bookings are subject to availability.

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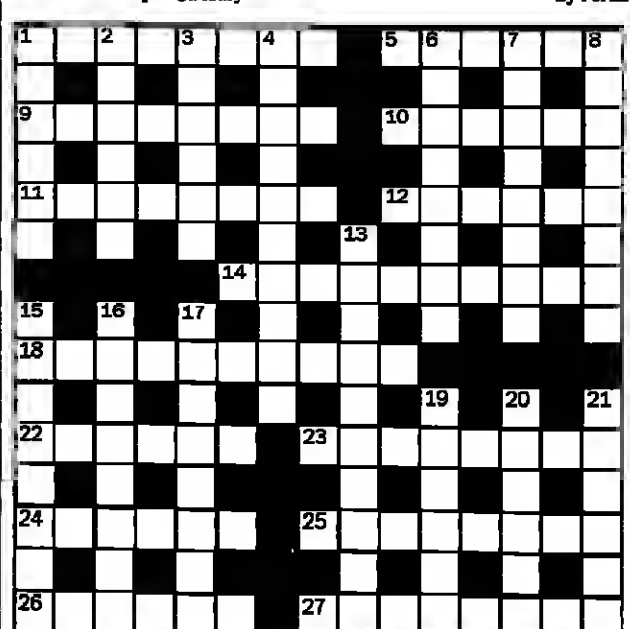
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* Closed from 6pm on Sunday Offer not available after 6pm on February 14

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No 3511, Monday 19 January

By Porcia



ACROSS

1 Move edition that's precious (8)
5 Forced Richard to reveal chap's name (6)
9 Visio I refer to in speech (8)
10 Practice patronage (6)
11 Betray Henry going in to hand over money (5,3)
12 Lie about large number of threads returned (6)

DOWN

1 American kid's relaxed attitude (2,4)
2 Due to arrive on the German branch line (6)
3 Order one containing wrong spice (6)
4 Detailed run down I have completed (10)
6 Key period to send in crack outfit (8)
7 Withdraws from area army unit's captured (8)
8 Grumble about American-English service (8)
13 Create ructions round a European golf course (10)
14 Level on points, right (10)
18 Doctor cannot ever break the rules (10)
22 Note what's left includes a bit of turkey (6)
23 Urge increased to retire and join oriental religion (4,4)
24 Bill I go off without - that's handy (6)
15 Foil container (8)
16 Altering organisation as a whole (8)
17 Showing irritation after losing ton of fish (8)
19 Showy pair of Greek characters (6)
20 I like cooing about new shade (6)
21 Beaten path many follow (6)